

The Housewife
and the Town Hall

By MRS. H. A. L. FISHER

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

GETTING AND SPENDING

STORIES FOR MARY

THEN AND NOW

THE CITIZEN

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

MOTHERS AND FAMILIES

LIFE AND WORK IN ENGLAND

THE HOUSEWIFE AND THE TOWN HALL

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT IS DONE BY
OUR LOCAL COUNCILS AND PUBLIC SERVICES

By
MRS. H. A. L. FISHER

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PREFACE

THE BASIS OF this little book is a series of talks broadcast by me and arranged by Miss Matheson, then Director of the B.B.C. Talks Department, in consultation with the National Federation of Women's Institutes. It was thought that not only country women, for whom the Federation could speak, but women in all walks of life, were anxious to learn more about the government of their country, and especially about local government, of what was done and why and how by local councils and other public bodies.

The existence and indeed the strength of this desire certainly seemed to be shewn by the letters I received in connection with those talks, as it has been by my experience in addressing women's meetings of all kinds in many places. The new generation of women may take their citizenship for granted, but both they and their elders are very willing to learn about the actual machinery of government, about the work of education, child welfare, health, which touch them so nearly. They wish too to discover what part they and their neighbours take or may take in the organization of public activities.

Believing as I do that the Women's Institute movement is one of the most valuable elements in village life, I should like to offer this small and very general account of part of the machinery of modern life to my fellow W.I. members, in the hope that to some of them it may be of interest and even of use.

LETTICE FISHER

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ERRATUM

On page 79, line 12 of the footnote, "To the local committees . . . " should read "To the Public Assistance Committees . . . "

CHAPTER I

Plans and Payments

THE NATURAL TENDENCY of mankind (though not of childhood) is to take things for granted. Our children perpetually ask us why and how things happen, and extremely perplexing their questions often are. We feel that there is an answer, but we ourselves are not able to provide it, and we get out of the difficulty as best we may, sometimes wisely, and sometimes otherwise. But we too have questions to ask. Why do our friends or relations who live in another town or village have things that we have not, perhaps new schools, or better systems of refuse removal, or policemen to see the children safely across the road when they come rushing out of school?

We have always taken it for granted that there should be postmen, policemen, schools, roads, and, if we live in towns, streets lighted and cleaned. Who sees to them all? Who settles about it? Why is more done in some places than others? If we live in the country and want books, whose business is it to arrange about a library? If we live in a town and our dustbins are not emptied often enough, what can we do? Grumble? Refer gloomily to 'them' and wonder what 'they' are doing about it? Who are 'they'? Why, how, and by whom are all these things done? How can we get more, or have them done better? And, a question which is inseparable from the rest, how can we have what we want and yet pay no more than we can afford?

It is obvious to us all, once we begin to think about it, that while there are, and surely always will be, many things that we can best do for ourselves individually, there are others which are most easily done for us in groups. There are different ways of arranging for these services which are suited to groups rather than to individuals. We may arrange for them, quite voluntarily, among ourselves. For instance, we in the country run our Women's Institutes, and all of us everywhere run all sorts of clubs, political, social, athletic, and the rest. We usually manage them by means of a committee elected by the members, from their own numbers. We pay the expenses by means of the members' subscriptions, and if those subscriptions are not quite enough to meet the expenses—which is all too often the case—we, the members, organize other methods of getting the required cash. Some of us who are more leisured, or more willing, or more energetic, or more capable, probably do most of the work, but all of us are, or are supposed to be, more or less responsible for its success. One or two people, however efficient and enterprising, cannot keep an organization successfully alive unless they are helped and supported by the mass of the members.

Again, we may feel that we want something that others have and we still lack, shall we say a resident nurse in our village. We talk it over among ourselves. The people who feel most strongly about it stir up as many others as they can. Gradually a large proportion of us agree that we need the nurse, and that we really must have her. There has perhaps been an epidemic of influenza, or a rush of new babies, and we have had difficulty in getting adequate help. Or there has been an accident, which might have come to almost nothing if skilled help had been immediately available, but which had serious consequences because the nearest doctor was some distance away. That brings things to a head,

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and there is enough steam behind the movement to produce a definite result. We have been discussing ways and means, finding out how other people arrange, and how far their methods fit our special needs. Perhaps we agree that each of us shall pay so much a year, or a month. Those payments, with extra fees for special work, will perhaps provide nearly enough for the nurse's salary, and in return for our fees or subscriptions we have a right to claim her services when we need them. We shall probably have to organize sales or socials to make up the balance, but the point is that we do it all quite voluntarily. Those who do not like the plan and do not contribute to the expenses do not share in the benefits and cannot claim the nurse's help. In the same way those who do not belong to the Women's Institute or the Club or Guild do not pay the subscription, but neither do they go to the meetings or share in the outings and socials and games.

That is one method of our organization, the voluntary method, and a very valuable method it is. It is infinitely elastic, it can be adapted to all sorts of circumstances and for all sorts of plans and for many experiments. It enables us to utilize the spare time and spare energy of people who could not give full time service, but who not only can give what they have but are anxious to give it, people who want to join in things, people who are good at organizing, people who like committees, people, in short, who can use their special gifts for the common good because of all the voluntary organizations which exist, and which depend, not upon full time work by a few, but upon part time service from many.

Voluntary organizations have played a very real and important part in our history. They have been pioneers and experimenters. We owe all sorts of things that have become part of the established fabric of ordinary life

to voluntary workers and voluntary organizations. For instance, the great friendly societies, the co-operative movement, our schools, our infant welfare work, our hospitals, scores of things upon which we all depend, were planned and begun by volunteers.

There is, however, another method which often grows out of the first and is often used in combination with it. Sometimes we find that certain things can no longer be safely left to voluntary effort. Sometimes it appears that they can be done, but would be more conveniently or more efficiently done, in other ways, things perhaps that definitely must be done or services from which everyone benefits, more or less, directly or indirectly, some more than others, but all in part.

An obvious illustration is that provided by our schools. For a very long while there had been schools, provided sometimes by an individual, sometimes by a society or a group. But some sixty odd years ago the people of this country came to the conclusion that the provision of schools could no longer be left entirely to benevolent or public-spirited persons, that it was essential to national well-being that every child should have a school training. It did not seem fair to the advanced parent, still less did it seem fair to the ordinary child, that the matter should be left open, that there should be enough school room in one place and not in another, that some children should go to school for six or seven years, some for two or three, some for none. So by means of legislation it was made obligatory upon us all to see that our children went to school. But this meant that schools and teachers had to be provided in adequate numbers. The old voluntary plans had covered a great deal of ground, but not all. Some sort of machinery was necessary to make the arrangements, and we have been gradually changing, developing, improving that machinery ever since. Indeed we are still, and probably always shall

be (I hope so, at all events), trying to improve it and to make it more complete and efficient.

To-day we all take it for granted that for every child between the ages of five and fourteen or fifteen and for increasing numbers of those over fourteen or fifteen, there are school places, teachers and equipment. It is a large assumption when we come to think of it, and to remember that there are something like six millions of children for whom to provide. How is it done? The method is to make certain people responsible for the work. Upon county borough and other local councils is laid the imperative duty of appointing what is called a Local Education Committee, a body which consists partly of persons who are members of the local council in question, and partly of others who are chosen because of their special knowledge of or interest in education. These people, the members of the Local Education Committee, have therefore been chosen, directly or indirectly, by us, for we elected the local councils. They are our representatives. We appoint them to spend our money and to make all the necessary arrangements for education in their part of the country. We do not make these arrangements ourselves, but we want them made, and indeed they must be made, because the law says so. The law in its turn came into existence because the electors at the time believed that it was necessary, and we, the present electors, can get it changed if we believe that to be necessary. Meanwhile the law must be carried out: schools and teachers and equipment must be provided: somebody must do it. We elect the local council, and it appoints from among its members the Local Education Committee which, having co-opted a few more members, sets to and gets on with the work.

Let us, for the sake of clearness, put all this another way round. A law comes into existence because, no doubt after much talking and arguing, public and private,

which has gone on perhaps for years, we have made up our mind that we want a certain thing done. We then instruct our representatives in Parliament to pass such laws as may be necessary in order to get that thing done, for getting us whatever it is that we have decided we must have—for instance, schools for the children. That too will take time and involve much discussion. When the measure has been hammered out in Parliament and has become law, we arrange that our other elected representatives, those who serve us upon local bodies (county or borough or district councils), shall carry out, or as we say administer, that law. The arrangements required for raising the necessary money will have been included in the law.

The difference between these two ways of doing things is that one is entirely voluntary and the other is not. No one need join in the plan for having a village nurse. No one is obliged to use her services, no one is obliged to contribute to the cost of having her there in the village. No one need belong to the Women's Institute, or the Cricket Club, or the Co-operative Guild. But everyone is obliged to pay, through the rates and taxes, for the educational service, and they must pay, not because they have children of school age themselves, but because the electors as a whole decided that children must be educated. We all pay, whether we have children or not, whether we believe in schools or not. The burden of payment is a national burden because the benefit is supposed to be a national benefit. We believe that we all gain by being part of a well-educated community. But we could not be made to pay, and the parents could not be made to send the children to school, unless the electors (that is, you and I and all of us) had made up their minds that such a course was not only desirable but necessary.

We, or those who went before us, chose the members of Parliament who were responsible for passing the

various Education Acts, those acts which empowered the various Education authorities whom we, again you and I and the rest of us, elect, to see to our educational arrangements, and to carry out our educational work. We, or our predecessors, were consulted before those Acts were passed. Ministers of Education and others went about the country making speeches, candidates for election explained the proposals, newspapers wrote articles about them. Those Acts empowered the various money-raising authorities, in plain words the tax-gatherer and the rate-collector, to extract from each of us our share of providing the cost of the schools and the teachers and the equipment. We must pay, and we must send our children to school. But we choose the people who make the arrangements, and we can, sometimes do, and always should, explain to them what we want from them, and what, within the limits of the existing law, we think they should provide for us. If we think there should be a nursery school or smaller classes in the elementary schools, or more provision for evening or technical classes, the local councils whom we appoint to carry out our wishes can provide them. But first we must convince those local councils that a sufficiently large number of the electors definitely want those things and are prepared to pay for them. That may take some doing.

As to how Parliament in its wisdom decided upon the method of sharing the cost between us all, and whether that method can be improved upon and how, is another and a longer story and not one into the details of which I propose to enter now. We all pay taxes, one way or another, some more, and some less. We all pay rates either directly or indirectly. Some pay indirectly through the rent, because it is the custom in the case of houses below a certain rental and of blocks of flats, that the rate should be collected not from the tenant

but from the landlord, who of course recoups himself by adding the necessary amount to the rent. It is a convenient and economical method for the rate collector, who has only to demand and to give a receipt for one large sum instead of a great many small sums. It is convenient also for the tenant, who often finds it extremely hard to produce a lump sum twice a year, and hardly notices the small extra sum every week or month. But it is not altogether a good plan because those who do not consciously pay do not always know either what they are giving or what they are getting, and still less what is the relation between the payment and the result. Those who pay, and know that they pay, are most likely to see that they get good value for their money.

However that may be, we all receive certain benefits, and have certain services performed for us, some more and some less, in return for our payments, which are also some more and some less. We all, for instance, benefit from the services of dustmen and roadmen. Those of us who have children of school age benefit directly from the schools (the rest we hope benefit indirectly because of their membership of an educated people). Those who have babies and young children benefit from the maternity and child welfare services. People with several children of and below school age cost their fellow-citizens a good deal. On the other hand, childless people or people whose children are out in the world contribute more than they cost, unless they are very ill or in some other way in trouble. Shopkeepers benefit from street lighting and from adequate police services. Some pay less and receive more, some pay more and receive less, some get perhaps as much as they pay for. The payments have no particular relation to the benefits. They are exacted from us in accordance with our supposed ability to pay. The amount of the rates is decided mainly by our local councillors, whom we elect. The

taxes are decided by the members of the House of Commons, whom also we elect. Not one penny can be taken out of our pockets except by the consent of our elected representatives.

We all pay something, and we all receive a considerable amount. Most of us take the benefits we receive entirely for granted, without in the least realizing how they happen to be there, who arranges for them, or how they are paid for. Most of us grumble when we have to make the payments, without having any very clear idea of what we get in return and whether we get our money's worth or not. Our demand notes for rates tell us (look at the back of it next time yours comes in) where the rates go. The various services there described are only partly paid for out of the rates. The balance is made up from the taxes, and all the details of how and in what proportions and the rest have been settled in Parliament after a very great deal of discussion. They get unsettled again, and changed, every now and then, when circumstances seem to make a change desirable. That is when the mass of electors, you and I and all the rest of us, have become discontented about something or other.

I cannot help thinking that it is a pity the average woman (and man too, for that matter) does not know more about it all, does not think it part of her business to be interested and informed. For one thing, there may be services of which we could avail ourselves if we knew that they existed or might exist. Not once or twice but many times have I come across people who have contributed, through rates and taxes, to the cost of such services (for instance, infant welfare or libraries), and who had no idea at all that they might be used, or indeed that they existed. Then again, unless we, the ordinary average citizens, know something about the way in which our affairs are managed, we lose. It is

disheartening and discouraging for our representatives to work for us if we take no interest in what they do, and we get no more than we deserve if they do not work very enthusiastically or efficiently. When electors are well informed, interested, fair, understanding, they are likely to find intelligent, capable, industrious people to represent them, and when the elected representatives are of high quality, the paid officials, on whom so much depends, are likely to be of high quality too, and the work that falls upon local councils will be well done. Where people are careless, uninterested, or care only to see that they pay as little as possible, when they grumble and complain of what their representatives do without really understanding the work, they have no one but themselves to thank if they are not well served.

Finally, from the point of view of ordinary common-sense, it is surely better to know something about what we get in return for what we pay, so that we may reasonably judge whether we are getting value for our money, and if not, why not. We all know from experience that if a Woman's Institute or a club or any organization is to succeed, the members must not only pay their subscriptions, but must also take an interest in the business. They must talk things over with their fellow-members and with their officers, say what they want, what they like, whether they are getting what they want and like, suggest improvements. There will always be grumblers who refuse to be pleased by the efforts of the very best committee, but no elected body or set of officers can give satisfaction unless they know, not only what the grumblers don't like, but what the other members do like.

It is just the same with public organizations. No law can be enforced unless it has public opinion behind it, any more than any law is likely to be placed upon the Statute Book unless a very considerable proportion of

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the electors are willing to have it there. We really run our own government, central and local, just as we run our own Institutes and clubs, only we do not know so much, generally speaking, about the business, the committees or the officers. Of course, many people are quite familiar with what is done by their local council, district, county, borough or parish. But a great many are not, though perhaps they would like to be, if they knew about it and what it was doing and might be doing.

So I propose to describe some of the services rendered to us, to you and to me, ordinary everyday citizens, by the officials, who are our officials, yours and mine, paid by us, we who are ratepayers and taxpayers, doing their work because the laws passed by our representatives have said it was to be done. All these officials are appointed and controlled by our representatives, the people we send to represent us upon our local councils, and they are so appointed, controlled and paid because of some particular Act or Acts of Parliament which our predecessors, or we ourselves, helped to make into law. We helped, that is to say, because our representatives in Parliament, after discussion and consideration and debate, after reading, hearing and making many speeches, causing other people to hear and read and write newspaper articles, considering many letters from their constituents, interviewing perhaps deputations or messengers from all sorts of organizations, passed that Act through all its many stages in the Houses of Parliament, and got it put upon the Statute Book. All these Acts can be changed or amended if they do not work well, or if they need bringing up to date, and new legislation can be evolved to suit new needs.

But the first stage in reform is knowledge, and we have, most of us, many possibilities of which we do not make full use, and others of which we might make more or better use. Most of us are so busy that we have not

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had the time or the opportunity to find out about the machinery of the state and about the workings of our own local councils. That is what in this small book I have tried to describe. It is worth while, and it is interesting, to find out about all the many things that by degrees have been planned, built up, organized, what we have done and what we may yet do.

CHAPTER II

The Baby

I PROPOSE TO begin, as is proper, with the baby, and to describe the people who are not only ready but anxious to help mothers with the care of their babies. Let me first relate very shortly how it all began, this organization for helping us with the most important business in the world, the business of giving the new generation the best possible start in life.

About a quarter of a century ago a handful of people got together and determined to rouse public opinion about that important baby. You may well think that as there have always been babies, and that as their mothers anyhow have always thought them important, whatever the rest of the world felt, there could not be very much new to say about it. But we believed that there was, and moreover we thought the matter very urgent, and we set to work, some by writing, some by making speeches and giving lectures, some by working out plans and experiments, and most of us by a little of everything.

What we wanted to make people understand was this. Public health as a whole was steadily and even rapidly improving, and the general death-rate in consequence was falling. But the death-rate among babies under a year old had remained more or less the same for about a century. Nor was that all. We knew—the knowledge was freshly acquired and to us seemed immensely important—that the evils which killed so many babies also maimed and damaged very many of those who survived, so that the population contained a large proportion of

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people who were born healthy, but who now had crooked bones, shaky nerves, bad digestions, bronchial troubles, poor teeth, all sorts of illnesses and weaknesses which made them less useful, less happy, less valuable citizens than they might have been if the conditions of their babyhood had been different. Above all we knew that many of those conditions were preventable. And we thought, and we still think, that if they are preventable they ought to be prevented, and that it was and is of the utmost importance to fight and if possible to destroy the evils that were killing so many babies every year and damaging so many more. We had to work hard to make people understand what was happening. Many believed that the high infant death-rate was nature's plan for weeding out weaklings, and we had to explain that not only the weaklings but many of the strongest and best babies fell victims to summer diarrhoea, wrong feeding and other ills, and that weaklings were often not so much born as made by the troubles that killed their contemporaries. We were told that as long as there was poverty there would be a high infant death-rate, and again we had to point out that while bad housing conditions were—and are—one of the worst enemies of healthy infant life, yet that the death-rate among extremely poor Jewish families who lived under very bad housing conditions remained low, while that of their non-Jewish neighbours was high, while every experienced person knew that poverty was by no means the only trouble. It is true that we probably save some weaklings who can never give much to the world, by our care, but what is even more true is that infant welfare work prevents illness, prevents crippling through rickets, one of the worst of crippling diseases, prevents all sorts of waste and harm, all sorts of weaknesses which must irrevocably hamper the new generation by causing a large proportion to grow up enfeebled, permanently damaged,

while others, who might have been strong, valuable, splendid, have been killed before they have lived for more than a few weeks or months.

So all through this present century numbers of people, at first only a few groups of enthusiasts and then more and more, have been hard at work organizing a whole network of services which try to make it easier for you and me and all the other mothers to bring up our babies successfully, to save the agony and heartache that comes from a baby's death, to save the suffering and waste and misery that come from preventable ill-health.

As a result of this work we can now say that far fewer babies die during their first year of life than did die twenty-five or thirty years ago, while those who survive have a better chance of health. Roughly speaking, out of every hundred babies born thirty years or so ago, in this country, about twelve or fifteen died before they were a year old. Now, out of every hundred born, somewhere about six die, somewhere between six and seven. We want still further to improve upon those figures: we do not think they are all that they might be, but they are sufficiently striking, especially when we try to realize what they mean. For we hope and believe that they mean not only the saving of very many lives, but a steady and real improvement in the health of all the babies and thus of all the children, a stronger and sounder generation, less preventable illness, better digestions, teeth, bones, nerves, more resistance to disease, less waste of time and money through illness, less suffering, less sorrow.

Now, suppose that a young mother is perhaps expecting her first baby and wants to be quite up to date, to know everything that she ought to know about the care of her own health and about the care of the baby when it comes, so that it may have the very best possible chance of growing up strong and sound. What help can she get?

There is much, and it is help which she may well use, because it is largely paid for out of rates and taxes to which she has contributed, and it is organized by the city or county council on which she is represented by people for whom she voted or might have voted, perhaps helped by voluntary workers, whose only desire is that the fullest use should be made of their machinery for helping babies and mothers. This machinery exists all over the country, but in some places it is more efficient and more complete than in others. She should find out what she has in her own neighbourhood, and if she thinks it imperfect, if she finds that friends or relations in other places have better arrangements, she can think and talk it over, get into touch with her representative upon the local council, or better still, get her Women's Institute or Club or Guild to press for the improvements that she thinks ought to be made. We know now what is wanted, and if we have not all that we need it is very largely our own fault, for we have not taken enough trouble about getting it. I do not mean our own individual fault, of course, but the fault of all of us who live in that particular neighbourhood. If we do not trouble to tell our proposed representative, at the time of the elections, what we think ought to be done, or to rouse and maintain an active public opinion, we are not likely to be as well off as others who do. However, let us go back to the young mother expecting her first baby, and let us see what help she can find.

Having a baby is a perfectly natural process, and one ought not to think of it as anything else. But there are about even the most natural processes, and certainly about this one, little things that may go wrong, and discomforts and troubles, even dangers, that may be diminished or escaped. The modern idea is that every expectant mother should be under an expert eye, and

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should be able to find that expert eye and expert advice in what is called an ante-natal clinic. A clinic does not provide treatment, but does give advice. Mothers are supposed to have their own doctors and nurses or midwives, but they need also a centre where they can talk things over with special experts, can get special advice about their preparations for the coming event, about their food and their general health, about all the little things which make so much difference to health and happiness. These expert advisers too are on the look-out for special difficulties which otherwise might not have been discovered. One of the saddest things is the death of a young mother during childbirth. There are too many such deaths among us, and a considerable number of them might be avoided if the conditions which caused them had been discovered before the actual time of the birth. If every expectant mother attended a properly organized ante-natal clinic there can be no doubt that the number of deaths in childbirth would be very much fewer, possibly halved. At present we have not quite got into people's heads the idea that ante-natal care is important. But ante-natal work is growing, and the number of ante-natal clinics increasing. There is not yet a large number, but it is increasing, and a considerable number of infant welfare centres now provide ante-natal care. Mothers who go to seek advice before the baby is born can not only be warned and helped about any special difficulties, about diet and teeth, for instance, but can also be put into touch with special help that they may need, such as maternity homes, dental help, and the like. Meanwhile at the clinic the mother should come into touch with the health visitor, who may and should become an invaluable friend, for she comes to see the mother in her own home, where they can discuss all sorts of problems which are hard to explain unless one is actually on the spot.

Suppose one is a stranger, more or less, in the place where one lives, how is one to find out about ante-natal clinics and health visitors? It is not at all easy for a young woman who has possibly not been married for very long, or who has not many friends in the place, to know where to get advice and help. If none of her neighbours can tell her, or if she does not care to make enquiries from them, nothing is easier than to write to the County or City Medical Officer at the Town Hall of the County Town, if the mother lives in the country, or at her own Town Hall if she lives in a town, and ask him where the nearest centre is. He will be only too glad to hear from her. Mother-and-baby work is one of his special jobs, and one of his difficulties is not being able to get into touch with all the expectant mothers, so that he may use his health visitors, who are ready and anxious to help. If she is in a town, it is less trouble perhaps to go straight to the Town Hall, to enquire for the Medical Officer of Health's Department, and there ask to see the Lady Health Visitor. If she does not like to do that, she can ask the visitor to come and see her. She will come or send someone, and the mother will be put in touch with all the local arrangements. Some sensible places have lists of the local infant welfare centres hung up in every large post office. If there is such a list, it is still easier to see which is the centre nearest to one's home and on what days and at what times it is open, and to go there on the first possible opportunity. There a mother, expectant or actual, will be welcomed, and once more put into touch with all the help that is available.

When the baby arrives, the mother will get her maternity benefit (about which something must be said when we come to discuss insurances) and a great help it is. When the baby is about a fortnight old, the nurse will say good-bye and leave it and its mother to their own

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devices. At that moment the mother ought, in a well-organized place, to receive a call from the health visitor, who will tell her about the nearest infant welfare centre, and probably offer her a nice little invitation card asking her to bring her baby there regularly. If the mother has already been in touch with centre and health visitor through the ante-natal clinic, the visitor will be an old friend who comes to welcome the new baby (it will get another warm welcome when it first comes to the welfare centre). But in any case, the mother will be well advised to take the baby to the welfare centre as soon as she can. She will enjoy it, and it is there for her help and her benefit. It is immensely interesting to see all the other babies and to compare notes with the other mothers, to admire their babies while thinking in your own heart how much, much nicer your own baby is than anyone else's.

What will the mother get from the centre? Just the little hints and advice and really skilled supervision that almost every mother wants, especially with a first baby, but more or less with every baby. I remember two separate twenty-first babies at our centre, and one of the mothers needed a good deal of help, while both were proud to display their infants.

At the centre, the baby can be weighed on proper baby scales such as not many of us possess ourselves, and we know that a regular increase in weight is as good a test as any of a baby's progress. Centres vary. Some like to see their babies monthly, some weekly. Mothers vary too. So do babies. But a mother who attends regularly at the welfare centre is sure of really expert advice on diet, clothing, and all the hundred and one things that make the difference between well-being and not getting on, both for herself and her baby. Some centres provide not only for mothers but for fathers, and can teach them how to make cheap cots and other

useful accomplishments. Finally, at the centres, parents can be put in touch with all the other organizations that exist for their benefit and that of their children, can for instance be put in the way of getting dental advice or treatment, or with orthopædic clinics if the baby should happen to need orthopædic help, or with many other specialist institutions.

The health visitors are in close touch with the centres and will be ready to come and see mothers comfortably in their own homes, to help them with all the little plans and arrangements for ensuring air and avoiding draughts, for keeping food, and the like.

In many places all this help and information and the whole management of the infant welfare centres is run partly by the local health authority, that is, the town or county council, and partly by voluntary work. In others it is run entirely by the local health authority. In any case, the county or county borough council is obliged by law to set up a maternity and child welfare committee, and it is the duty of that committee to make all and any arrangements that seem necessary for the well-being of the mothers and babies in that area. It may do much. It may do little. Something it must do, and what that something is probably depends mainly upon the interest in the question of child welfare shewn by the local electors (and the members of the committee).

The really important person in the matter is the Medical Officer of Health. It is he, under the committee, who is responsible for the whole organization, and it is he who must supervise all mother and baby work in his area. He has very considerable powers, and if he uses them to the best advantage can do a very great deal for the well-being of the coming generation. Like all public health matters, the work of the maternity and child welfare committee is part of the work of the local council, and is inspected, stimulated, helped, advised, by the

Ministry of Health. It is paid for, the centres are maintained, the health visitors and doctors' salaries paid, the other expenses met, partly out of the rates, for which the local council is responsible, partly out of the taxes. The taxpayers' contribution is paid by the Minister of Health, who has to get it from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. So the whole business is done partly by those who represent us in our capacity of ratepayers and their employées, and partly by those—the Ministry of Health officials—who are paid out of the taxes, and for whose salaries, as well as for the grants paid to local authorities, the Minister of Health is responsible to the elected representatives of the taxpayers in the House of Commons.

The perfect organization, whether it is voluntary, public, or a mixture of both, should provide a welfare centre within easy reach of every mother, and should have an efficient staff of health visitors, who can see mothers and babies in their own homes, tell mothers all about the centres, find out if they are bringing the babies there, and if not why not, explain to them that the centres are their own and exist for their use. They can explain too that the centres are not meant, as are hospitals, to cure a baby when it is ill, but very definitely intended to prevent it from becoming ill, and to help all mothers to rear their babies in the very best possible way, to keep them in touch with the most modern ideas. It is not a question of wealth. There is no reason why every mother should not have access to the best advice, and in most places to-day most mothers have. There are still not as many centres, nor as many health visitors, as some of us would like. But there are very many more than there were a few years ago—somewhere not far from three thousand centres—and the pity is that they are not fully used. They are one of the best things that we have organized for ourselves in the course of this century.

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Some unhappy babies have no mothers, or for one reason or another have to be cared for by women who are not their mothers. For these, too, the Medical Officer of Health is responsible, for everyone who is paid for taking charge of a baby or small child has to notify the public health authorities of the area, and is liable to inspection. There have been some agonizing stories about baby farming in the past. We have gradually strengthened the powers of our local health authorities in such a way as to prevent these horrors. If mothers need help, babies without their mothers need protection, and we hope that our laws are now sufficiently strong to enable the Medical Officer and his staff of visitors to give them the protection, help and oversight that they, more than any other children, so much need.

CHAPTER III

The Schools and School Children

BETWEEN THE SCHOOL child and the baby is a gap, as yet unfilled. Many people believe that in towns, where there is little play-space for small children, provision should be made for their care in the years between babyhood and school. The toddler is always under his mother's feet. It is hard for her to arrange that he should get enough open air, enough free play, enough watching, enough guidance; it is desperately hard to answer his endless questions and to answer them in the right way. His health is as important as that of the baby, so is his mental and moral training. The mother would value expert help: ought she not to have it? In the country there is air and space. Small children can be turned into gardens or fields, the freedom and space difficulty does not press so hard upon them. But even in the country the small child is a problem: the roads are full of peril, the narrow rough country lanes, once perfect play-places, are not safe from the all-per-vading motor bicycle, and country mothers now hardly dare let the children out of their sight unless the garden is safely enclosed and the gate fast shut.

Again, the doctors tell us of a number of small troubles which could easily be mended if they were at once discovered, but which for want of expert watching remain unchecked, too often develop into serious ills, and take long to cure. Far too large a percentage of children, when for the first time they arrive at school, are found to be suffering from something which only

the skilled eye of a doctor or nurse can discover, or which perhaps the mother has observed, but of which she does not understand the importance, and something moreover which need never have occurred, or might have been immediately cured, if it had been taken in hand at once. In short, once more we find a number of troubles which may be serious, which in any case are wasteful and distressing, troubles which might have been, and therefore should have been, prevented. Time is wasted when the children get to school, because it has to be spent in putting right something that ought never to have gone wrong. There are in fact about two million of these small creatures aged between two and five, and of that number somewhere between a quarter and a third need mending one way and another when they come to school. Until they are put right they cannot make use of all that the schools are ready to give. Ought we not to be taking steps for the prevention of this waste? We have, more or less, perfected the organization for the babies: why should the toddlers and tinies be forgotten?

The answer is that of course they should not, and that we are experimenting, trying all sorts of different plans for looking after them and for helping their mothers with expert advice and guidance. There are a few nursery schools, and a good many day nurseries, mostly where they are most wanted, that is, in London and other large towns, and there is also an increasing determination to make the baby-centres available for the toddlers as well. It obviously needs a good deal of planning and adaptation, but it can be done, and where it is properly done there is an immense gain to the health of the tiny children. The welfare centre looks after them and advises about their health until the day when they go to school, and the school medical service then takes charge. That is excellent, but it

does not meet all the needs of the little ones. It does not provide them with space for play or air, and other plans are tried in other places. There is still plenty of room for experiment, and especially, perhaps, for voluntary schemes, for playgrounds, and open-air shelters, and nurseries, and nursery schools, and before too many years have gone by we may hope to work out elastic and varied plans which will suit the needs of different places. London or Manchester or Sheffield have not the same needs as a country village, but both have needs. That is perhaps the next thing to get done.

Meanwhile there are the schools, which we all take entirely for granted, but which are well worth rather more consideration than they usually obtain.

Like so much else, they began with the voluntary efforts of a few enthusiasts who believed that education—some sort of education anyhow—should be provided for all children, or at least for as many children as could be got at. They believed that education should not be the privilege of the few, that an educated nation was a sound nation, that popular education, in short, really mattered. As time went on, as the schools established by the voluntary agencies became known; as the results of their work began to shew, there came to be a feeling that not only *some* of the children, those for whom the voluntary schools provided, but *all* the children should have schooling. Education should be made compulsory. But if it were to be made compulsory, it could no longer be left entirely to voluntary effort. The gaps must be filled. The first thing was to fill those gaps, the next to work out plans by which the schools provided by the public and those provided by voluntary funds could be made into one complete system. We are still at work experimenting, developing, planning, and although we have not arrived at a logical or complete whole, we have, in the usual British fashion, managed to combine

the two streams into one very fine river. In other words, we have an educational system of which we ought to be uncommonly proud, possibly one of the best in the world at this moment.

Education is in the hands of bodies called local education authorities. The bodies are committees appointed from among their own members by the local councils, with powers to add outside persons, not elected members of the councils, but people with special educational knowledge. Like the Maternity and Child Welfare Committees, the Education Committees *must* be appointed by the Councils ; their appointment is a statutory obligation. When appointed they have certain duties. They must provide school places and efficient teaching for every child of school age, that is, roughly speaking, from five to fourteen, or if the local council think fit, fifteen. (There are two kinds of Local Education Committees, with differing powers : one for elementary and one for advanced education.) They also may provide secondary education for the older children, and all sorts of classes, of all kinds, for the rest of us. All this is paid for partly out of the rates (your rate demand note tells you how much your local education committee spends on education) and partly out of the taxes. They are, therefore, our schools, provided by us, the rate-payers and the taxpayers, for all the children, one educational system provided for the advantage and the use of the whole nation. Schooling is compulsory, every child must attend school as long as it is of school age, unless its parents can shew that it is receiving a satisfactory education elsewhere. It is compulsory because we believe that an educated nation is a sound nation, that education is absolutely essential not only to efficiency but to well-being. Or we can put it in other words and say that, in this difficult complicated modern world no uneducated nation can expect to prosper, least of all a

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crowded people like ourselves. And we can put it in yet other words, and say that a system of self-government, such as that which we have built up for ourselves, requires very considerable effort, knowledge, ability, if it is to succeed, and that a broad basis of general education is the essential foundation of a democracy. Some people may not like democracy, and some may not like education, but we are a democracy, and we are not likely to make much of a success of it unless we provide ourselves with a satisfactory educational system.

What ought that educational system to do? What are its aims? What are the teachers trying to do? Ought we not to ask ourselves those questions, both as parents and citizens? As parents we are the colleagues of the teachers. We and they are together responsible for the training of the new generation, that is for the next stage in building up this civilization of ours. What sort of citizens do we want? What do we expect the schools to do for them?

Some countries, for instance Russia and Italy and Germany, give their own answers to these questions. Their systems of education are based upon ideals very unlike ours. They attempt to train their young citizens to believe enthusiastically and entirely in their own particular system of government. They do not wish so much to give them a wide general training as a whole-hearted and as it were religious belief in and devotion to the views upon which their government is based. Young Russians are taught to be single-minded Communists, to believe that all other methods of government are wrong, are indeed criminally wrong, and that everything must be sacrificed to ensuring the safety and success of Communism. Young Italians are taught to believe in the Fascist State, young Germans in the National Socialist State, to work whole-heartedly for its success, to believe that by its means alone can Italy

and Germany take and keep their right places among the nations of the world.

What do we want to do? What are our ideals? We do not, as a nation, believe in what seems to us one-sided teaching. Most of us think that education should so train the faculties as to enable us to form opinions for ourselves, rather than to make us fanatical enthusiasts for any one set of views. Educationists do not think it honest or fair to bias the children in favour of any one political system: rather would they provide for them surroundings in which they can develop all their faculties, physical, moral, mental, to the fullest extent. Nor should we think it right to spend money, contributed by taxpayers and ratepayers of every shade of opinion, upon the teaching of any one special set of views. We want to train citizens, but we do not try to make them into fanatics. We do not think that children, as children, ought to have views forced upon them. We believe that they should have all the opportunities that we can give, to enable them, when they come to years of discretion, to make up their own minds. We do, however, believe that self-government is an immensely valuable possession, and most of us think that our own special plans for self-government, which we have been building up all through our history, which have grown with our growth, are probably those which suit us best. But we also realize that while they suit us, they are not necessarily equally good for everyone. Moreover, in this rapidly changing world, no system can survive unless it is elastic, unless it can provide new machinery, or adapt that which exists to fit new needs. If we are to make the best of the system we possess we must also make the best of the people who are to work it.

No thinking person can be content with things as they are. Immense improvements have taken place, many old evils have been removed, old unwanted rubbish

cleared away, other troubles lessened. But the very developments which have helped to solve the old problems have also helped to create new, and we need to be constantly upon the alert, ready to hold fast that which is good and that which is still useful, while also ready to clear away and replace that which is no longer in working order, or fit for modern conditions. This world in which we live is infinitely exciting, infinitely interesting, infinitely full of possibilities, but no one can pretend that it is simple and easy.

Nor is self-government an easy business of which to make a success. Other peoples are trying their own experiments in methods of government, and we must take trouble if we want to keep ours, which has grown up from ages of experiment, which has so often served as a model for peoples in other lands, which has developed because of our nature, our history, and our passion for managing our own affairs in our own way. We need good training to enable each of us to take our own share in the business, for self-government means that everyone must play some part, and it is as true now as ever that eternal vigilance is the price that must be paid for freedom. We need a sense of perspective, the ability to arrive at a balanced judgment, the power of sifting the true from the false. We need a sense of evidence, and ability to resist being swayed by gusts of feeling, or of being unduly influenced by newspapers or even by orators. We need a willingness and ability to take responsibility when required, to think of the general well-being and the general interest, an anxiety to try and understand how that general interest can best be served. We have these qualities. We need to make the most of them. Anyone who has been in an accident or in any sort of emergency in this country will have experienced the common sense and capability of the ordinary man and woman; the way in which people keep their heads, in which they organize

themselves to meet the trouble, in which there is always someone to take charge, to accept responsibility, to look after the weak or the ill.

Our education will, we hope, develop what is best in us all, help us to fight against selfishness, wastefulness, the stupidity and want of understanding which send motorists (whether in cars or on cycles) hooting and roaring through a sleeping village or street at night, or covers the loveliest parts of the country with broken glass, dirty papers and the other horrors that disfigure our world after any holiday. Good citizenship is a quality that should not be reserved for politicians, but valued and practised by everyone. There is any amount to do, for very many people are constantly needed to serve upon all sorts of committees and councils, and the work done by these bodies is of the very greatest importance to us all. Not only men but women are required, and at present the proportion of women serving is extremely small, while the work done closely concerns mothers, wives and housekeepers. Meanwhile, every one of us, whether we serve or only vote, even if we neither serve nor vote, is a factor in that indefinite, inexplicable, but extremely important element in our system, public opinion. We are governed by, because of, more or less in accordance with public opinion, and the better informed, wiser, saner, more generous, and more balanced that opinion is, the better will be our government, both local and central.

But education for citizenship, though to some of us the most important, is by no means the only business of the schools. The children have to be trained for the whole of life. They have to get ready to earn their livings, that is to make their own contributions to the stream of goods and services out of which we are all maintained, and they have, too, to learn to enjoy that leisure which was once the privilege of the few and is

now the possession of all. In old days, children were above all else taught to earn their livings, and schools were mainly thought of as places where children could learn to sew or to read and write and reckon, not because reading or writing were ends in themselves, but because they helped the child to be useful. Now we believe, and believe with good reason, that in a world where Nature's forces, steam, electricity, and the rest, do most of the heavy work for us, a new kind of education is needed to fit us for work. We need to be adaptable, intelligent. We want the children trained to observe, and to reason. We want their hands and their eyes and their ears to function quickly and accurately. We want their muscles developed and we also want them controlled.

But we further want the children to be trained for the wise use of leisure, that leisure the extent of which is so new a problem, and for the right use of which we have hitherto made but little provision. We try to enable the children to develop all sorts of tastes and all their faculties. Some have a real ability for craftsmanship of different kinds, for using their hands in all sorts of skilled ways. Some are musical, some literary, some have the artist's gift. Some have a love for birds and plants and flowers, for watching and understanding the processes of nature.

Here again is the newer side of our educational system. The old ideas of schooling made no provision for the use of leisure (why should it, when few could expect to enjoy leisure?) and took no account of the human need for beauty, for song and dance and craftsmanship. All this heritage, so nearly lost, our schools try to give back to the children, and gradually we may hope perhaps to have a people which understands and enjoys line and colour and sound and movement, which refuses to endure the drab ugliness of the worst parts of the last century, which enjoys and understands the countryside,

which makes and uses beautiful things. No one who has seen the handwork of elementary school children, watched them dance, seen their genuine pleasure in singing, known their powers of imagination, fancy, humour, can doubt that we have as a people a valuable heritage. Nor, looking, listening, observing, can any one doubt that we are still wasting much of it. The schools are helping to remedy this waste.

One of the most interesting, and certainly not one of the least valuable of our recent educational developments, is the School Medical Service. It came to be more and more strongly felt that the teaching provided for the children was too often wasted, either entirely or in part, because of some defect in their physical condition. So now every child is thoroughly overhauled by a specially trained doctor at least three times in its school life, as soon as possible after it first goes to school, somewhere about eight or nine, and when it leaves. Very often, whenever necessary, it is seen at other times. The objects of this medical inspection are first to discover any physical defects that need to be put right in order that the child can make the most of its school life, and next, to get any such defects dealt with as soon and as completely as possible. But inspection and the arranging or providing of treatment is by no means all. The medical officers of the Board of Education have worked out whole plans of physical training, and provided means for teaching the teachers to give this physical training, plans which aim at the right development of the child's body at every stage of its school life. These plans of ours are studied and often imitated in many parts of the world. I once saw a party of small Turkish boys in Constantinople doing physical exercises strictly copied from our English school model.

There are all sorts of interesting experiments going on with regard to the health of the school child, open-air

schools, open-air classes, school journeys, camps, meals of various kinds. There are several kinds of school clinics where minor defects are treated, some for instance which give artificial sunlight, others that look after the children's teeth, while there are also arrangements made with the local hospitals and doctors for the treatment of various defects. Some places have special classes for stammerers.

Now let us pause for a moment and recapitulate. We want the schools to help us to fit our children to earn their livelihood, and to earn it satisfactorily and well, to make for themselves, as we say, a good living. We want the children when grown up to enjoy their leisure, and to be able to use it in all sorts of ways, so that their lives shall be full and rich, so that they shall have wide and abundant interests, so that they shall keep the alertness and freshness and intelligent curiosity which they have as children and too often lose as they grow up. Experience has taught educational thinkers that the right way to train children is not so much a matter of what they are taught, but of the way in which they are taught. What they learn matters far less than how they learn. We do not want, while they are young and undeveloped, to teach them trades or professions, but we do want to train their minds and hands and eyes and ears in a way which will enable them to tackle any job, whatever it may be, in the best possible way. We want our schools to give opportunities to every child to make the very best of itself. We, the parents, are not and cannot be experts. We have not had, as a rule, the kind of training which enables us to be experts. The educational system provides us with expert help, with school doctors and nurses who advise us as to the care of the growing bodies, with trained teachers to help us with the growing minds and developing characters. We try to give to the children not only the education

which will help them to make a good contribution to the world's needs, to pay the world for what they get from it, but also to make the very most of their own private lives.

In old days there was almost an attempt to make the child into an efficient machine. Now we have become a world not of human machines but of machine users. We believe that the way in which we can help the children to make the very best use of themselves, either as workers, as citizens or as leisure-enjoying individuals, is not to teach them at school a trade or a political creed, but to give them the very best all round training for the whole of themselves, for their bodies, their minds and their characters.

That belief is really the answer to much of the criticism that one hears both from parents and from taxpayers and ratepayers as to what goes on in the schools. Not very many people really take the trouble to try and understand either what the children do or why they are asked to do it. Yet it is worth understanding, whether we are parents or merely citizens who contribute to the expense. Informed criticism is always useful. The criticism of people who do not know the facts is not only useless but dangerous. Therefore, whether we are ordinary people without children, aware that as taxpayers and ratepayers we are forced to pay our share to the cost of education—the average yearly cost per child is somewhere about £15—or whether we are parents, having our children educated at the public expense (to which we of course contribute, though, especially if we have more than one child, we are likely to contribute only a part) we ought to know something about the educational system of our particular district, and about that of the country as a whole.

Education committees provide not only for children of school age. They have built up a large system of day

and evening classes, literary, technical, artistic, by which people beyond school age can go on learning. Some of us realize that education may well be a life-long process, and many of us are hungry for more than we had time to obtain when we were actually of school age. For all these needs education committees can provide, and many do provide in generous measure. They vary very much. Some are more extravagant, others more imaginative, others more experimental than the rest. It is probable that much depends upon the kind of electorate they have behind them, in other words, how much the ordinary people of the area they serve know and care about what they are trying to do. Meanwhile educationalists from other lands come here to learn about what we are actually trying to do in the schools and outside them. What we want to do is to train good citizens and happy, healthy, sound individuals, people who work well, who use their leisure happily, wisely and in many different ways, a race able to make its full contribution to the world and the civilization of which it forms a part. How much of all that we succeed in doing probably depends upon how much we want to do it, that is, upon the understanding and sympathy of the ordinary average parent, the work and devotion of the ordinary average teacher, and the good-will of the ordinary average citizen who has to pay for it all.

Every county or borough council has an education office, and an official who is usually called the Director of Education and sometimes the Secretary to the Education Committee. At the office the enquirer can be put into touch with local activities, can find out what provision is being made for the training of teachers, for the provision of secondary schools, for day and evening classes of various kind. Any local government elector who is dissatisfied, who feels either that not enough or too much is being done, or that too little or

too much is being spent, or that what is done is badly done, or what is spent is unwisely spent (and all these views are held by electors) has the remedy in his or her own hands. He or she helps to elect the council which appoints the committee. If he and she can get enough people to share the views in question, they can bring influence to bear upon that council. Even quite a modest number of people, even one individual, if sufficiently determined, and sufficiently well-informed, can produce a very real effect. Attempts are being made in many places to bring the parents into close contact with the schools, so that both as parents and as citizens they may have a fuller understanding of what the schools are trying to do, and why and how.

It is quite impossible to over-estimate the importance of the educational system of a country. Ours has many merits. It is very elastic: education committees can work out for themselves the kind of plans that suit their own locality best. There is plenty of room for experiment: all kinds of exciting experiments are being made all over the country, in one place a village college, in others school journeys, in one town children are taken out into the country to spend part of their school time, and much else. It uses voluntary as well as professional help. The secondary schools, for instance, which are so remarkable a feature of modern life, and have increased so much in number of late years, each have their own governing committees, and the governors can do a very great deal to help and encourage both teachers and taught. Educational enthusiasts, not necessarily members of the local council, can (and do) help on local education committees.

Like all our institutions, our educational system has grown gradually, by means of experiments, by the help of enthusiasts. What we now have is primary education for every child, and post-primary education for all up

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to fourteen or fifteen, advanced education for a very considerable number up to sixteen or eighteen. We are trying a number of different plans for the post-primary schools, trying to provide for all the infinitely varying children. Some are definitely bookish, and ought to go on to the universities. Some are artistic and should go to art schools. Some are musical and should have special opportunities for developing their musical abilities. Some are good with their hands and need technical and craftsmanship training of many kinds. Gradually we hope that in every area all these needs can be met: in most areas most of them are already more or less adequately met. Gradually too, we have built up a whole network of scholarships to help on the financial side. We used to talk about the educational ladder. It is a broad highway now, not a steep ladder, and every year we do a little to improve the surface and to round off bends and ease gradients. Besides all that, we have also all sorts of plans for grown-up people, for providing them with educational help. So that we have good reason to be proud of our educational arrangements, even if we still find room for criticism, as we no doubt always shall. But every parent, and every ratepayer, ought to know something about what is going on. Parents should go to see the schools and the school work. Ratepayers who grumble at the rates should find out exactly how they are being spent, and will then be in a better position to decide whether or no they are getting good value for their money. People who have a little leisure and goodwill can work upon some of the voluntary organizations, such as those which help town children to country holidays, or care committees, which work in connection with the schools. There is plenty of interest and opportunity for us all, and the Education Offices of our City or County Hall are busy with work which intimately concerns every citizen.

CHAPTER IV

Work and Workers

SCHOOL IS MEANT to be a preparation for life in all its aspects. If it has given our children what we should like them to have it will have fitted them to be good citizens, good workers, and happy people with plenty of interests. They will certainly have acquired habits of order, punctuality, method. They should have learnt the invaluable lesson of being able to concentrate their attention on whatever they have to do, and of giving it their best while they do it. They should have some mastery over their own language, in speech and writing. They ought to have had a glimpse at the rich heritage of beauty that is theirs in English literature, a door, as it were, should have been opened through which they can look at the wonders beyond and through which they are free to walk at any time in after life. So, too, while they cannot be expected to have anything that can be called a knowledge of history, they may well have some notion of what history means, some sense of perspective, of the growth and development of civilization, an introduction to existing institutions. We should like them, shall we say, to know of the existence of the city or county council, of Parliament, of the British Empire and of the League of Nations, and have an idea, if no more, of how they came to exist and what they try to do. They cannot be expected to have scientific knowledge, but they may well have some conception of what science and scientific work means, of the relation between cause and effect, of the tremendous achievements of

the past and the infinite possibilities of the future, perhaps some little knowledge of the machinery of their own bodies and of the growth of plants and animals. They should have learnt to use their heads and hands and ears and eyes, and to have found pleasure in the using. The carefully planned physical training and the periodical medical inspections will have helped to secure for them the proper development of their growing bodies, the equally carefully planned lessons a right development of their growing minds, the whole atmosphere of the schools should help to train them in a sense of responsibility, not only for themselves but for others. We should like them to understand a little, not only about what they have a right to expect from their fellow-citizens, but also about what they can contribute to the common good, a little about the different peoples of the world who have all been brought so much closer together because of wireless and modern transport on sea and land and air, and the ways in which they are related to one another and deal with one another. We should like them to leave school eager to learn and to do more, eager to play a part in the world, to avail themselves as fully as possible of the opportunities for working and playing and learning and making and doing which may be theirs.

Now all this has taken a good deal of doing and cost a considerable sum of money. The children may leave school at fourteen or fifteen, or they may have gone on to a secondary school, and worked there till sixteen or seventeen or eighteen. In any case the ratepayers and taxpayers will have invested large sums of money in their education. What happens next? Is there any further machinery of which they can avail themselves, or are they now able to strike out unaided? Here is one of our modern developments. We came to think that it was perhaps rather wasteful and extravagant to spend so much and then to do so little to guard the investment,

to see that the children made the most of themselves. So we are working out plans for helping them to a wise choice of a career. Often little if any help is needed, for many young people fall naturally into the family job, whatever it may be, are ready to be trained by an older relation to succeed to some post or occupation which they feel belongs to them by right of descent. Work naturally and rightly goes in families, but, as every one knows, there are a great many exceptions to that general rule, and many a parent is very much bewildered by the tastes of the rising generation. Young people sometimes feel a reaction against what they have been accustomed to all their lives. They may feel that their parents' trade or profession is one that was useful but no longer fits the new needs of a changing world, or they may want to strike out along entirely new lines, in which case the family can hardly be expected to know quite what to do or how to find the required openings.

With all this in view, we have been trying to work out plans for helping the young people to a wise choice of career. There should be everywhere, and there is in many places, a committee which is in close touch with the local educational authority, the local employment exchange, and the leading employers and directors of business and industry. Teachers usually have a good idea of the kind of work at which their children are likely to succeed, and the right machinery will make full use of that knowledge. It should bring teachers, employers, parents and children into close touch, and should possess the kind of knowledge and experience which will keep children out of blind-alley occupations, help them to find the kind of jobs which are really suited to them, help parents to understand—as far in this bewildering world of change as it is possible to understand—the kind of directions in which industry is moving, so that the more promising openings may be

well filled. These committees are developing, as is right, in different ways, to suit the varying needs of different places. No one who has had experience of the waste and misery that results from putting a young creature into a job for which he or she is wholly unfitted can doubt the value of an elastic, sensible, experienced organization which will help the young in the choice of employment. There is also growing up a body of knowledge which helps such a committee or its officers to give what is called vocational guidance, that is, to pick out the right job, by means of various tests, for each young person. In some places specially trained officials are being appointed to do this work, and it seems possible that much waste of valuable human material may be avoided where it is well done.

Meanwhile, there are these Juvenile Advisory Committees, and there is also the official at the local Labour Exchange whose special business it is to deal with young people, and who works in the closest possible connection with the Advisory Committee. The first person to consult would be this official, whose knowledge and experience makes him or her a most valuable advisor. But where the machinery has been well worked out, the school-leaving young person will almost certainly have talked things over with his or her teachers, and will have been put into touch with the advisory committee, told when and where and how it is to be found, and both the child and its parents will probably have had a very good idea of the kind of work for which the teachers think the child best fitted.

Thus, the bridge between school and working life is being built, and those who cannot find their own way across it may be assured of help.

Suppose, however, that for the moment nothing can be found, or that work is lost. The agonizing waste of unemployment is perhaps almost more distressing when

it concerns young people than it is when it afflicts their elders. School has taught them to be tidy and punctual and busy and alert, to live well-occupied days, has given them plenty to do and to think about, kept them in good physical and mental training. Is all this to be lost? Education committees, in places where there is juvenile unemployment, are trying to make plans for the help of the young people, and many thinkers believe that in the case of unemployed juveniles some attendance at educational classes for physical training and the like should be compulsory, to prevent them from going to bits and losing all the tautness and alertness and readiness and general good habits which their years of school training have given them. It is most fervently to be hoped that little juvenile unemployment will exist, and even in these difficult days there is not, except in certain areas, an unmanageable quantity. The matter is not easy, for young people who feel that they have grown up, left school, are not very ready to submit to discipline, however out-of-work they may be, while the necessary buildings and teachers are not always available. Still, here too, valuable experiments are being made and good work done.¹

In London and a few other places splendid help is given to children and young people by means of what are known as care committees, voluntary organizations which work in connection with the schools, and act as links between the children and the various institutions of all sorts and kinds that exist for their benefit. No two children are alike, and the helpers who work for these Care Committees can give the individual friendship and interest of which no child can ever have too

¹ Since this was written in Nov. 1933, the Government's Unemployment Bill, now (1934) under discussion in Parliament, requires the local Educational Authorities to consider the amount of juvenile unemployment in their areas and, where necessary, to provide instruction for unemployed juveniles.

much. Such help would be useful almost everywhere, not in any way to replace either the teacher or the parent, but to aid in finding out about clubs and camps and jobs and all sorts of other things which the parent can hardly be expected to know. Every parent is expected to be in some sort an Enquire Within upon Everything, and most of us are extremely glad of a little assistance.

When the boy or girl has settled into a satisfactory job, the education committee is still anxious to help. Education committees provide a large and varied selection of evening classes, while in a few places, though unfortunately only in a few, there are continuation schools. But any boy or girl who wants to go on learning can find plenty of teaching, and can carry on his or her education either from the point of view of technical training of many kinds, or of literary and artistic development. Probably the young people will have heard about all this before they left school, but where that is not the case they or their parents can get all information by applying to the office of the local education committee at the town or county hall.

Meanwhile, the physical well-being of the young worker is not forgotten. Anyone under sixteen who wishes to take employment in a factory must first be looked over by one of the seventeen hundred doctors who are called certifying surgeons, and whose business it is to see that the young person in question is fit for factory life. The factories and workshops themselves are regularly inspected, and have to comply with certain regulations designed for the maintenance of the health and well-being of the people who work in them. There is, in fact, an enormous code, called the Factory Acts, which has been gradually growing for more than a century, is periodically gone through by Parliament and brought up to date—usually some time after the

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impatient think that that operation ought to have been performed. Anyhow, up to date or not it must be complied with by those who are responsible for the management of factories, and it provides for necessary lighting, ventilation, heating, sanitation, and the like, as well as for hours of work and of meals, and for the fencing of dangerous machinery.

There are special regulations with regard to young people. Efficient employers maintain conditions which not only comply with the Acts but are well beyond them, for it is coming to be more and more understood that good work cannot be continuously done under bad conditions. But not all employers are wise, nor indeed are all employ  s sensible, and the body of officials whose business it is to see that the Acts are complied with have to look out for breaches on the part of both. These officials are called Factory Inspectors. They are not controlled and paid, as are sanitary inspectors, by the local councils, but are paid by the taxpayers and controlled by one of the government offices in London, the Home Office. They are, however, quite easy to find and very accessible, and are ready and eager to help. One of the provisions of the Factory Acts is that there must be posted up in some position where it "may be clearly and easily seen and read" an abstract of the Acts, and the name and address of the Factory Inspector for the district must also be clearly and plainly given. Any breach of the law therefore, not only can but should be reported to the local Inspector, whose business it is to see that the law is obeyed.

There is much thinking and research in progress about industrial conditions, industrial fatigue, what are known as occupational diseases, general health and much else, and one of the most valuable functions of the Factory Inspectors is to make this new knowledge available, and to do what is possible to increase general well-being. It

is no easy job and needs a very high degree of tact, perseverance, and much steady work. Sometimes the employers are behind the times, sometimes the workers are inclined to resent having to take precautions or to obey regulations which seem to them tiresome and fussy. There is apt to be among us all an inclination to think that what we have always done we should always do, and that new plans are new nuisances. However that may be, the Factory Inspectors are paid by us, the taxpayers, in order to guard the health and well-being of factory workers, and to maintain what we for the time being consider the necessary minimum of healthy and safe-working condition in factories. If they can get more, so much the better, but see that the Acts are obeyed they must and do, even if it means prosecuting offenders against them. And young people, who in the nature of things need most looking after, are their especial care.

Lastly, special provisions are made for looking after school children who also earn. Local authorities are bound to make regulations upon this matter, and the amount of paid work which may be done by school children during term time is carefully limited by the Education Acts. The reasons for this provision are obvious. The ratepayers and the taxpayers spend many millions a year upon public education. If the children's energies are absorbed and their strength used in wage-earning occupations outside school hours, they are unlikely to profit fully by the teaching they receive in school. So the children are guarded by the law, and elasticity is given by allowing local authorities to make their own regulations within the limits of that law.

CHAPTER V

Keeping us Healthy

I HAVE TRIED to shew how we have built up an organization for the care of infants, children, and young people. But long before we realized the importance of making special arrangements for helping mothers to care for their babies, we had come to know something of the need for guarding the physical well-being of the general public. Our public health service is one of our most successful efforts in organization, yet very few people seem to know much about it.

A century ago it did not exist. There were a few regulations, but there was no public health administration, and there was very little knowledge of the real causes of disease and ill-health. That knowledge was sorely needed. Until the last century most people lived in the country, and although they suffered severely from diseases due to dirt and to ignorance, that suffering became appalling when they crowded into towns and left the country, which had at least air and space outside, however crowded and insanitary the houses. They filled up the existing space in the old towns, and new houses were run up as fast as they could be built, back to back, unlighted, unventilated, undrained, without water supplies, houses crowded on the ground and people crowded into the houses. All this happened, not because people were evil-doers, but from sheer ignorance as to the laws of health, laws which could not be disobeyed with impunity even in the open country, but the disregard of which produced the most appalling

results in the crowded towns. The conditions under which people lived (as they had long lived in parts of the old towns such as London) were so shocking that it is hardly possible to describe them, and terrible diseases such as typhus and cholera, now extinct in this country, ravaged the cities. Every sort of refuse went into the wells and rivers, so that the water which people drank was swarming with disease germs. There were no arrangements for the removal of refuse, almost none for drainage. There were terrific epidemics of cholera, another disease which most of us in this country have never seen or known. It was indeed these epidemics which roused people to the urgent need for protecting themselves and their health. Doctors and men of science had been investigating and had gradually built up a body of knowledge which was in due time translated into terms of law. Those who knew and cared made the rest of the people understand why such scourges as cholera and typhus ravaged the country. So Parliament was forced to produce the legislation which was required if we were to build up administration for the care of the public health, for the prevention of preventable disease, for the removal, that is, of the conditions which cause disease.

The result of it all is that this country is one of the best administered, from the public health point of view, in the world. We who live here are very unlikely indeed to die of cholera and typhus, we are not at all likely to die, though a few of us still do, from typhoid or small-pox. We may expect to live considerably longer than if we had been born a century or even half a century sooner than we actually were. Our children have a still better expectation of life, and what is even more important, a better likelihood of health. There is plenty still to do, and many things which we might do better, but if any one of us to-day could be transported back

into the conditions of a century ago that individual would receive a very violent series of shocks.

Let us think what the Public Health Acts do, and first let us consider the matter of houses. We all know that old houses wear out and have to be replaced (and we are suffering a good deal now from the complete wearing out of the houses built about a hundred years ago), that new houses are wanted for the new and increased population, and that the process of providing houses in the right places, of the right kind, and at the required moment, does not always go as smoothly as we could wish. But every new house that does get itself built must be built in accordance with certain regulations. It must have windows of a certain size and a certain relation to the size of the room, and there must be enough of them. They must give enough light, and they must be made to open in such a way as to provide air. The builder is therefore obliged to provide for the two first and perhaps greatest essentials of health, light and air, and if the occupiers choose to shut out light by heavy curtains and keep the windows firmly shut, that is not the fault either of the builder or of the law. The house must be guarded against damp, and must have what is called a damp-course, which prevents damp from rising up from the ground into the walls. It must not be built back to back with another so that through ventilation is impossible (as far too many houses were built before this provision was made), and it must not be built so close to another that light and air are shut out. It must have adequate sanitary arrangements. Underground cellars must not be used as dwellings. So much for new houses.

Existing houses, built in earlier days, must be made to conform as far as possible with those building regulations which embody our knowledge of the laws of health. It is the duty of every house-owner to keep his property

in what is called habitable repair, that is, reasonably fit for human habitation. There is often a great difficulty about this. The old houses are worn out, or need complete re-arrangement in order to allow for through ventilation, or to be in other ways brought up to date. But if they are closed will there be enough new houses for their present occupants? People who live in old houses are often very unwilling to move. They are accustomed to the inconveniences, and they are attached to the neighbourhood. They dislike the thought of being pulled up by the roots and transplanted. Nor is there always anywhere for them to go, either in the district to which they are accustomed, or at the rent which they are prepared to pay. The counsel of perfection no doubt is to let the old people alone, but to prevent any new tenants from occupying the houses until they have been brought up to date and made what we believe to be safely habitable, but these things are not always easy to arrange. Meanwhile, the public health officials constantly inspect old houses which are doubtful or unsatisfactory, and do what they can to ensure that they are kept in as good condition as seems possible.

In the case of new houses, proper drainage and proper water supplies must be provided. The regulations about drains and water are not the same in the country as they are for towns, because the conditions are different, but adequate arrangements must be made. All this business of seeing that new houses are built with proper drains, water, light, air and damp prevention, as well as the business of keeping an eye upon old houses, is undertaken by the local councils, the town council or the district council. These bodies have staffs of trained officials whose duty it is to inspect buildings, which cannot be built until the plans have been seen and approved. These officials can order dirty and insanitary

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houses to be cleaned and made wholesome, and they can and do prevent new houses from being built unless they comply with the law. They look after the drains and see that they are in working order. If any one of us should be worried about drains, or refuse removal, or other conditions about our homes which seem to us unsatisfactory, the sanitary department of our local council is the proper authority to help us, and its officials are there for that purpose. If you have reason for complaint, do not be content, as so many people are, with grumbling and fretting, but take the necessary action. Go or write to the Public Health Department of your local council and tell the sanitary inspector what is wrong. It is his business to get it put right.

New houses may be, and constantly are, actually built by local councils. Some do more, some do less, according to the needs of their areas, and the desires of their electors. Some people feel that the main business of the councils is to direct and control houses built by private or semi-public enterprise, and that it is not altogether easy for the same body to construct and to supervise construction. Others feel that it is one of the main functions of local councils to ensure by all and every means in their power the provision of enough houses of the right kind.

In towns the local council is by law obliged to arrange for the removal of refuse, an essential service for which no arrangement was made in old days when every sort of horror lay about indefinitely, with results that can be better imagined than described, a state of affairs which in crowded towns led to incredibly disgusting conditions and was a fruitful source of disease. It is even now a difficult problem, this business of refuse removal. We town housewives lightly cast all sorts of refuse into our dustbins, knowing that the dustman will in due time take it away, and we think no more of

what is going to happen to it. Our local council must, however, give a considerable amount of thought to the matter, and its officials must undertake much planning and organization before it can be safely, inoffensively and wholesomely disposed of. It costs more than most of us probably suspect: one figure is something like £1 a year for every five of us, but whatever it costs, the work must clearly be done, and its proper doing is one of the very first essentials for keeping us healthy. Moreover, the old methods of dumping town refuse in some out-of-the-way place are becoming impossible as this small island of ours gets fuller and fuller of people, and the habit of inflicting our town nuisances upon some unlucky bit of country is clearly intolerable. So that refuse removal is no small problem, and its cost no small item in our rates. In country districts we are often left more or less to our own devices, and we have to get rid of our tins and our waste as best we may. To some extent we succeed in disposing of rubbish without too much difficulty, but its satisfactory disposal is a real problem and one which many people are considering, for example, the Women's Institutes.

One of the things we have achieved—and it is a big achievement—is the provision of a safe water-supply for most, though not yet all, districts. The frequent epidemics which were due to bad water are a thing of the past. Anyone can safely drink water in any town in this country, which is more than can be done in most parts of the world. It is the legal duty of the local authorities to ensure a proper provision of pure water, and although some villages are still very imperfectly supplied, especially in dry summers, it is nevertheless broadly true that most people if not yet all, have an adequate supply of perfectly good water. It seems so natural to us that we never think about it, but anyone who has travelled is in a position to appreciate what a very great thing we

have accomplished in providing that supply. Rivers are guarded by law from pollution—not quite sufficiently guarded yet—but precautions are taken which should keep them clean and pure. Poisonous products may not be discharged into streams and rivers; nor may streams and rivers be used as drains.

Water, houses, buildings, drainage, refuse disposal, all these matters are seen to for us by the health officials of our local councils, but that is only the beginning of their work.

There is a whole web of regulations about food, which have been made as our knowledge increased and which must be enforced. Places where food is prepared, especially dairies and bakeries, must conform to certain regulations, and the local council must see that they do, so that our bread and our milk may be preserved from contamination. We housewives are protected in many ways. Markets and ports are inspected, and food which is tainted or otherwise unfit for use is destroyed. Things which profess to be one thing and are really something else are investigated, and the makers are obliged to describe their produce in more or less accurate terms. Butter, for instance, must be butter and not a mixture of a very little butter and a great deal of some cheaper preparation. So must milk be milk, even if it is dried. A preparation which called itself dried milk was found upon investigation to be mostly made of soya bean and vegetable oil, possibly quite wholesome, but certainly not milk. Our watchful officials put a stop to that. We, the ordinary housewives, cannot know exactly what is in the tempting packets and tins which are offered to us, but the county and city analysts do, and they try to protect us.

Some day perhaps we shall use our powers of citizenship to ensure still greater cleanliness and purity in our food supplies. We shall, for instance, prevent food from

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being exposed to flies and to dust, and we shall insist that bread is properly wrapped (think of all the unwashed hands that touch our nice crusty loaves). But we have not learnt that lesson yet. Public opinion is not yet fully aroused to the horrors of dirt, dust and flies, and does not yet fully understand their powers of poisoning us through our food. The Women's Institutes and other bodies of organized women, here, as elsewhere, are doing most valuable work, both in helping their members to understand the facts and in bringing pressure to bear upon the government and the local authorities. There is plenty more for them to do, and they are going steadily on at it. Milk is far cleaner and purer and safer than it was, and some day all this pressure of public opinion (our public opinion, that of the women who do the household buying) should secure a really safe milk and food-supply for everyone.

Let us stop at this point and look back. Broadly speaking, the local authorities who are entrusted with this important business of maintaining the health of the citizens at a high level have two tasks. They must try to PREVENT the existence of conditions which are likely to cause or to spread disease, such conditions, for example, as impure water, accumulations of refuse, unhealthy houses, unsound food. Then they must try to MAINTAIN conditions which lead to good health, for example, healthy, well-built and well-planned houses, abundant supplies of fresh air, enough open spaces. All these things they try to provide. They all have, and they all enforce, building regulations which ought to prevent the erection of unsatisfactory new houses. They have power to inspect existing houses, and they can make house-owners put their property into habitable repair, or they can do the work themselves and make the owner pay the bill. They have powers, now (1934) in process of being strengthened, to clear away the old worn out

houses and ill planned streets which we call slums. They can plan out as-yet-unbuilt-on land for future use, so that in any new building scheme the houses should not be too close together, should have enough sun and air, and so that there should always be enough open and unbuilt-upon land. They can provide open spaces and recreation grounds for the inhabitants' future use. They can, and do, build houses when and where the shortage of houses distresses the population, leads to overcrowding and therefore endangers health. They must, and do, employ a very considerable number of inspectors, whose business it is to ensure that our food-supplies are kept clean, that we are not poisoned by unsound fish or meat or fruit, that we are not cheated into buying something because it purports to be something else, and by seeing that all the places in which foods are prepared are in a clean and wholesome condition. All this work is of the greatest importance, and is clearly the sort of thing that we cannot as individuals do for ourselves, and that we very much want done for us, on our behalf, by our elected representatives to the various local councils. It is well worth our while, that is, to pay for having it done, as we do pay through our rates.

There are, of course, many other things done by the councils, in their character of guardians of the public health, for instance, keeping the streets clean, flushing out the gullies and drains. The object of these operations is to keep us well, to prevent attack by the many diseases which are due to dirt, to impure food and water, bad drains, unwholesome, unlighted, unventilated dwellings. To all this work that they *must* do they can add a number of things that they *may* do if they choose. They may, and do, for example, build public baths and wash-houses, and the baths may be swimming baths, either open-air or enclosed. (Most of the baths which have

been built and maintained by local councils are in towns, but a few belong to rural parishes.) The provision of houses is one of the matters to which most local councils have been obliged to give thought in this last twenty years, and especially since the war. The difficulty which they have to face is not so much a shortage of houses as a shortage of cheap houses; and local councils, with the best will in the world, have not found it easy or even always possible to build them at a cost which will enable the rent charged to the occupiers to cover the expenses of maintenance, repayment of and interest upon the capital used in the building. As an inevitable result, therefore, those who live in council houses are having part of their rent paid for them by the enforced contributions of their fellow-citizens, whether through the subsidy paid by the government, which comes out of the taxes, or by the difference between their annual cost and what the occupiers pay in rent, which comes out of the rates, or through both. Their fellow-citizens believe that it is better to bear this expense than to allow people to live under badly crowded conditions which are fatal to health, moral as well as physical. But it is not a wholly satisfactory position, either for the subsidized or the subsidizers, and in many places there is a good deal of feeling about who should live in subsidized houses, so that the councils have a difficult task in making a selection of tenants, and in thinking out the principles upon which that selection should be made.

All this then, housing, inspection of houses, of drains or of food and water and work-places and the rest, the removal of refuse, the enforcement of regulations, is the work which helps to keep us well. It is a great service, this public health service, and it is administered by the people whom we send to represent us upon our local councils, and is paid for mainly out of the rates to which we contribute. It is therefore our public health

service, and we are responsible for it. If it is unsatisfactory anywhere, the inhabitants of that place should blame themselves. If the paid officials and servants of the local council do not do their work properly, it is the business of the elected representatives to find out why and to see that they do. If the elected representatives do not exercise proper supervision, then it is our business, as citizens and ratepayers, to replace them by others who will be more efficient.

Meanwhile, if any housewife is in trouble about drains, or water, or damp, or bad repair, or rats, or vermin, or lack of refuse removal, she should not hesitate to go or write to the department of the Medical Officer of Health in her town, or if she lives in the country, the offices of her district council. She should remember, too, that she has an elected representative, someone from her ward or her village, and she should not be afraid to make use of this representative. Clearly we must be reasonable and not expect miracles, but certain things we have a right to expect, and it is the business of our elected representatives to appoint and pay (out of the money we contribute through the rates) efficient servants to see that we get our rights. The elected representatives cannot do the work themselves. They have neither the training nor the time. But it is their business to appoint those who have both, and to see that they do their work aright. And it is our business as ratepayers and as citizens to elect those who can be trusted with that job.

CHAPTER VI

Our Health continued: The Treatment of Disease and the Prevention of Infection

THIS GREAT ORGANIZATION for the business of keeping us well, by clearing away bad conditions and preventing them from coming into existence, is by no means all that our public health authorities do for us. We found that it was not possible to deal adequately with the prevention of disease without making some provision for its treatment. Much of this provision is made now, as it long has been, by the voluntary hospitals which themselves represent a great triumph of the voluntary system. Much, too, is done, as again it always has been done, by the family doctor, and a number of plans of different kinds were worked out for helping people when they were ill, usually by enabling them to make small regular payments when they were well. In return for those payments they could have either a weekly sum during illness, or grants for special treatments or appliances, or for medical attendance, or all and any of these things. There were, and are, a great variety of schemes in different places. But over and above all this we have gradually made public provision for a number of special conditions, and again for a number of reasons. We have found, for example, that there are certain diseases which are so universal, and so dangerous, that it is safer for us all to authorize our public health authorities to deal with them, and to make such provision as seems necessary not only for their prevention but also for their treatment.

Thus, for example, special provisions are made for the fight against tuberculosis which, as we all know, has been one of our worst scourges, but which, as most of us know, is no longer anything like so merciless an enemy as it was in old days. It is indeed one of the diseases with which we have learnt how to deal, and which therefore we can to some extent prevent. We have learnt how it is caused, we know the circumstances in which it flourishes, and we know how to discourage it. We know that it is peculiarly a disease of dirt and dark and damp, and that its two greatest enemies are sunshine and fresh air. We know how the infection is spread, and therefore we know how to prevent it from spreading. Those of us who have talked to old people, or even read old novels and memoirs, must have noticed how in almost every family there were early deaths from consumption, how people were said to go off into a decline, and how it was taken for granted that such tragedies must occur, and that families should continue to lose a considerable proportion of their members because of this disease. No attempt was made to prevent infection because little or nothing was known of how infection was caused; little or nothing could be done for treatment because little was known of what could really help.

We have changed all that now. We know exactly how to prevent infection. We know that although children may inherit a tendency towards the disease, they do not inherit the disease itself. We know how to strengthen those with such a tendency in their fight against it. We know how to treat those who have actually contracted the disease, and we know that in a large number of cases the treatment will be efficacious, and that if the patients live open-air lives and take certain precautions, not only have they a good chance of recovery, but they need not infect their neighbours. So, knowing

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all that, we have built up a special machinery for carrying out the necessary work. Many local authorities have a special doctor, the tuberculosis officer, whose main business is to look after the tuberculosis patients in his area. He has a clinic which they attend, and a staff of health visitors who go to see them in their own homes, and who can give the skilled advice which is needed in order, not only to help the patient, but also to prevent the spread of infection. Special hospitals are arranged for tuberculosis patients, hospitals where they can be treated, and where too they can be trained in the habits which will help to keep them well, and in those which will prevent them from making others ill. There are tuberculosis committees which can do all sorts of things to help the patients in their fight, no longer a hopeless fight, against this disease. Much too is done for prevention by keeping careful watch over children and young people whose families suffer or have suffered from tuberculosis, and over those who come into contact with infection.

Again, very much can be done, and is done, for cases of surgical tuberculosis, and more and more local councils are making arrangements for getting orthopaedic treatment, that is, treatment for the cure and prevention of the crippling diseases, of which tuberculosis is one of the most active. When these arrangements are perfect we hope that every child who is attacked by one of the crippling diseases will be under the care of those especially skilled in their treatment. There should be a special orthopaedic hospital for an area, and clinics all over the area, closely linked with the hospital, so arranged that no one in any village is at any great distance from such a clinic. Some cases will have to go to the hospital, and may have to remain there for some time, but many others can be treated at the clinic. Home visits are helpful too, and the clinic should have a staff of skilled

visitors. Crippledom, like tuberculosis, is quite definitely one of the evils that we now know how to fight, and to fight with every hope of success.

Some day, and let us hope soon, we shall have all over the country, as we already have in some parts, a complete organization, not only of hospitals, but of clinics and visitors, so that no one is out of reach of their help and everyone can get it at the earliest possible moment. All this may mean expenditure of public money, that is money collected compulsorily from rate- and taxpayers. But most thinking people agree that if it is, as it should be, wisely and carefully expended, it is money well spent. For every cripple and every person ill and helpless from tuberculosis is a burden upon the community, one way or another, upon his family, or upon public or private help. If by judicious expenditure we cannot only cure those who are ill but prevent many others from becoming ill, we hope that we are saving ourselves a great deal more than we spend, as well as saving an infinite amount of sorrow and trouble and pain. Lastly, tuberculosis work, and work among cripples, often gives a fine opportunity for the combination of voluntary with public help. Home visiting, the organization of the clinics, and the conveyance of patients to and from their houses are all often done by volunteers, acting under the direction of the tuberculosis officer or of the clinic superintendent, while the orthopaedic hospitals afford many openings for help of different kinds from volunteers.

Tuberculosis is by no means the only disease with which our local councils concern themselves. One of the great troubles in old days was the impossibility of preventing the spread of infection. Scarlet fever, diphtheria, smallpox, flew from house to house, ravaged schools, laid low whole groups and areas. In ordinary houses the infected person cannot be kept wholly separate

from the rest of the family, nor is it easy to give the patient the special nursing required. So here again we have taken action, and our local authorities provide special isolation hospitals where people who are so unfortunate as to have caught one of these infectious diseases not only can be nursed back to health, but can be prevented from infecting their family, neighbours, and friends. If only cases of infectious disease can be found quickly, and isolated quickly, there is every chance that they will remain as single cases, while if on the contrary they are not discovered and not isolated, the illness may be contracted by considerable numbers, especially if the patient happens to frequent crowded places, like schools and cinemas and shops, and then we have to deal with an epidemic. Local authorities, through their sanitary department, undertake to disinfect the houses of those who have had an infectious disease, and this once more helps to prevent the spread of infection. Special arrangements are made for the provision of vaccination by the public health authorities, as one of the means of guarding against smallpox. In connection with this disease medical science has made enormous strides. In old days, as is well known, people expected to have smallpox, and it was considered very important to get one's girls safely married before they had the disease and lost their looks. Travellers too will have noticed how many pock-marked people are to be seen in some other countries, and how few in this island. If we can do for tuberculosis what we have done for smallpox, we shall have eliminated one great cause of suffering, waste, and misery.

Local authorities now have under their charge a number of hospitals which were established and maintained by the Poor Law Guardians, and which have now been transferred to the County or County Borough Councils, which usually place them under the direction

of their Medical Officer and their Public Health Committee. There will no doubt be a considerable amount of experimenting in the matter of hospital arrangement, so as to ensure that the proper amount of hospital accommodation of all kinds is available for every locality. Hospital work is so enormously varied now, with all the new developments such as electricity, X-rays, and the like, that the matter of hospital organization is not altogether easy. The old Poor Law Hospitals usually dealt with chronic cases, which needed skilled nursing and proper care such as they could not get in their own homes, but which were not suitable for the general hospitals, which aim at the cure of disease. They also did maternity work, and, like all hospitals, had a number of accident cases for which they had to be adequately equipped. Now that they have been taken over by the County Councils a good deal of thought is being given to the whole problem of local hospital organization, the fitting in of all the various hospitals as part of one great scheme, with proper provision for maternity, for orthopaedics, for all the many-sided business, and the arrangements naturally vary from place to place. The point perhaps to bear in mind is that we, in our capacity of ratepayers, are responsible for the maintenance of a large number of hospitals, which look after maternity cases, chronic cases and accidents, others moreover which provide for infectious cases, and are therefore part not only of treatment but also of prevention.

Local authorities also make provision for other troubles, for instance, the care of mental patients. Mental trouble, which used to be so terrible a difficulty, is now understood to be as much an illness as is any other illness, and one which requires very special skilled and trained care and good surroundings. All this is now provided by us, the public, through our local authorities. Provision is also made for that distressing group of diseases

known as venereal. There is often a special medical officer and a special clinic, where these troubles can be treated. It is most important that they should be properly treated, for, as is well known, they are highly contagious and involve terrible suffering. Under a recent Act local authorities may undertake work for the blind, an activity which seems to be developing, and which is one of the ways in which the work of voluntary organizations is most successfully combined with that undertaken by public authorities.

To sum up, then, the work of local councils has developed through the work of prevention to the work of treatment. Prevention is their main and their original business (except for the hospital work which used to be under the care of another set of local authorities, the Poor Law, and is now theirs). But as the preventive work developed, the other work of treatment was seen to be necessary, and developed also. In some cases the authorities do the work themselves, actually providing and equipping and managing hospitals and clinics, in other cases they pay existing specialist institutions, such as orthopaedic hospitals, to do it for them, while in yet others they combine with each other or with different organizations and institutions in a number of ways, financial and administrative. Different plans here as elsewhere, here perhaps most of all, suit different places, and the widest measure of elasticity is a real advantage.

All this work is part of the province of that immensely important person, the Medical Officer of Health, and all information about it can be obtained from his department at the Town or County Hall. Illness must always mean anxiety and trouble and distress. But those of us who remember, or have been told, what it used to mean, and then compare the past with present conditions, can realize how very much the public health activities of our local councils have done, and are doing, to help

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us all. The burden of infectious diseases is far less, disinfection and treatment are easily obtainable. The death and damage rate is less. The infant welfare clinics watch over our children, not only from birth, but from the first moment when we, their mothers, know that they are coming, if we choose to use their help. The school medical service continues to watch over them as long as they are at school, and to some extent and in some places, to provide them with treatment for some of the more common troubles. Lastly, the public health services watch over us all, preventing, or trying to prevent, the evils which cause sickness and disease, providing treatment for sufferers when, despite all the plans for prevention, infectious or other disease actually comes. It all costs a great deal of money. Your rate demand note will shew you what proportion of your own rates are spent upon public health work, and a contribution of considerable size is added to that from the taxes. But where and when that money is well and carefully and wisely spent, as in most of our areas most of it is, it is probably one of the best investments that can be made. Good health is among the greatest of national assets.

CHAPTER VII

Insurance and Pensions

NO ACCOUNT OF our plans for improving public health would be complete without some mention of the Insurance schemes. But their history, the methods by which they are organized, and their general administration, are quite unlike those of the ordinary public health administration, carried on as it is by the various local councils, under the general supervision of the Ministry of Health, so that they deserve separate treatment.

Those of us who are older remember the days when there was no state system of insurance against sickness. A great and immensely valuable system had been gradually built up by the Friendly and Provident societies, to one or other of which most self-respecting people belonged, and had by their means been enabled to make some provision against sickness, and for meeting the inevitable expenses of death. It was a splendid organization, and anyone given to pessimism may be well advised to read the history of these societies, the wonderful work they did, and the tiny beginnings from which it all came. It is a thrilling story, and one which we ought to know, describing people and events of which we may well be proud. The principle upon which they were built was that of collecting quite small weekly sums from a very large number of people, who were in return guaranteed a lump sum at death, and varying benefits during illness. Gradually, as the experience of these bodies grew, it became possible to work out accurately how much could be given in return

for each scale of payments, and there was often, indeed perhaps usually, a fine spirit of fellowship among the members, and a real organization, not only of money benefits, but of neighbourly help.

But there were always numbers of people who either had not joined a friendly society, or had failed to keep up their payments, and so were not insured. There came to be a belief that this work needed to be, so to speak, universalized, that everyone ought somehow to be provided for in case of illness, and that the only way to ensure such provision was to make it compulsory.

When illness comes several things are necessary. One, obviously, is a doctor, but another is an income, and when there was no insurance, when the income stopped, as in most cases it stops as soon as the family earner falls ill, how was the doctor to be paid? What happened, far too often, was that the doctor was seldom called in until the illness was well established, that people went on working long after they ought to have stopped, and the result, the miserable result which all of us older people must have seen only too often, was that what might have been a slight trouble, if it had been treated at once, developed into a serious and perhaps fatal illness. Now this state of things again meant waste, meant illness and bad health which might be, and therefore should be, prevented. But if a voluntary system were to become compulsory and universal, much hard thinking had to be done. Arrangements had to be made with the existing friendly and provident societies, and with the doctors, while those accountants who had special experienced knowledge of insurance finance had to be consulted, and an immense amount of thinking, planning, negotiating, was required. Some of us remember how difficult it all was. But in the end the beginning of a system of national health insurance was established, and established upon the firm foundation

of the friendly societies, with all their wealth of organization and experience.

Our system does not as yet cover everyone, or indeed anywhere near everyone. In the first place, there is an income limit, and in the second it only applies to wage-earners and not to their families. It was established, as we all know, upon a treble basis. The necessary contributions are made, partly by the wage-earner, partly by the employer, and partly by the State, that is, by the taxpayers. Those who do not benefit directly from the scheme nevertheless contribute to it through the taxes, for the same reason that they contribute to the expenses of public health work. The reason is that ill-health is expensive, not only to the sufferer but to the community as a whole, that every sick person is an expense and a burden, that good health is an asset and one of the greatest assets that a nation can have, a truth which cannot be too often repeated. If, because there is no provision for medical attendance or for an income, there is, as there most certainly used to be, much preventable and unnecessary ill-health, not only was there preventable suffering and misery, but also preventable expense and waste. That preventable suffering, waste, and expense still exists, no one can deny, but neither can anyone who remembers the past deny that the national health insurance scheme has helped to diminish them.

It is not yet perfect, as indeed it could hardly expect to be. Something of what was valuable in the old plan has been weakened, or perhaps lost. The scheme is on so large a scale that the old sense of mutual responsibility is lessened. When it was strongly felt, members of a society were anxious to keep down illness, and thus to increase the benefits obtainable from the payments made. People were more deeply interested in the prevention of disease when they knew that the better the health of their fellow-members the greater would be

the benefits, or perhaps the lower the necessary contributions. Any attempt at what is called malingering was likely to be met with a short shrift. All this is just as true now as it was then, although less easy to realize when everything is upon so large a scale. If we can go on building up the national health, if we can teach our young people the laws of health, train them to form good habits and avoid bad, we may well look forward to improvements in health insurance possibilities, to increased benefits of various kind, if the existing scale of payments is maintained, or alternatively to lower payments for the same scale of benefits. Imperfect as the scheme may be, and young as it certainly is, it has without doubt done much to remove or diminish, for great numbers of people, one of the worst nightmares of our lives, the terror of having an illness, or an accident, or an operation, of not being able to pay the doctor, of having nothing coming in for one's family.

What are the benefits received by the insured population in return for their compulsory contributions, together with the equally compulsory contributions from the employers and the taxpayers? The insured person has a right to consult, and to be attended by one of the doctors who are on what is called the panel, in the district in which he lives. He can choose any one of these doctors, but having chosen cannot change unless and until he has complied with certain conditions. This ability to consult a doctor whenever necessary is of the greatest importance, because of that stitch in time which in health matters so certainly saves nine, but it is not quite certain that the stitch is always taken. People still put off going to the doctor until the very last moment, and often for the good reason that they do not want to make an unnecessary fuss. On the other hand, every doctor has a few tiresome patients who are only too ready to fly for help on the slightest provocation, and are ready,

too, to put themselves on the sick list as often as they can. Between these and the stoics, who go on working, and put off seeing the doctor till far too late, the rest perhaps steer a fairly even course. Upon the doctor's certificate of illness, the sick person gets sick pay for a certain number of weeks, and disablement pay for as long as the disablement continues.

There is trouble about employed women, and especially about employed married women, whose claims have proved to be in excess of their payments. There are many reasons for this. One is that our recent troubles have particularly affected the areas in which married women are most employed, and the strain has resulted in increased illness: another is that the double job of earning and housekeeping is exhausting: another is that a woman may be not well enough to work, and yet well enough to manage at home, and is glad to draw sick pay or disablement benefit while she does it. But all these and other difficulties about payments and benefits can only be worked out in the light of experience as time goes on. Meanwhile, insured women, and the wives of insured men, get the maternity benefit, which has certainly proved the most unmitigated blessing. Only those of us who remember what things were like in the old days can perhaps measure its value, but everyone can understand its helpfulness. Among other things it has done much to raise the standard of midwifery, for it has made possible the payment of more reasonable fees (low as they still are) to midwives, and has consequently enabled mothers to obtain the services of highly trained women.

Illness always has meant and always must mean anxiety, trouble and inconvenience. But we of the older generation who can remember what things were like, can appreciate the change for the better due to health insurance. Meanwhile, there is a still older

benefit, dating from the last years of the nineteenth century, and that is workmen's compensation, which assures payments during any period of incapacity due to accidents, and which now includes payment in the case of certain definite industrial diseases as well as of accidents. Provision is also made for partial incapacity and for dependants in case of fatal accidents. Finally, now that the health insurance scheme has been in operation for somewhere about twenty years, experiments have become possible. Extra benefits have become available for insured persons, and two very valuable recent developments are dental and ophthalmic benefits. Convalescent treatment, and a period in a convalescent home, can also be arranged.

I wish that the far-sighted people who started the great friendly societies could look down upon us now and see what we have done with their plans. They might think us less self-reliant, less willing to organize ourselves and to depend upon our own payments, than they were. But they surely would look with satisfaction upon the way in which we have arranged insurance for about fifteen million people, have collected their contributions, and have assured for them not only sick pay, but also access to the whole range of modern surgical and medical treatment, a range and variety which in itself would probably stagger their imaginations.

Still more recent, and therefore still more experimental, is our effort to arrange for the other nightmare of most of our lives, the agonizing nightmare of being out of work. For many years we had been trying to think out plans for insurance against unemployment, and experiments were made at the time when National Health Insurance was started, though only with a few industries, those in which the workers were specially exposed to the risks of being out of work. After the war the scheme was extended. The plan was to base unemployment upon the experience of health insurance,

and to find the necessary money partly from payments by the insured themselves, partly by contributions from their employers, and partly by contributions from the taxpayers. Unfortunately, the pre-war experience, which was all that was available, was not enough to guide us through the terrific difficulties of these hard after-war years, and although the contributions have been increased and the benefits diminished, the position is still one of very great difficulty. Owing to the abnormal and indeed unimaginable troubles through which we are labouring, it is hard to see the way, to distinguish between relief and actual insurance, that is, a clear relation between payments made (by the three contributions of employed, employer and taxpayer) and benefits received. As things have turned out, the general taxpayers have had to pay far more than had been expected, and the whole question of who and how and how much and for how long, the whole relationship between the ordinary contributors and the taxpayer, who has to find any balance that there may be upon the wrong side, is in the melting-pot. That some provision must be made for unemployment is recognized probably by everyone. How it should be made and whether it is possible to make adequate plans for it upon true insurance lines, is in dispute, and both our representatives in Parliament, and we ourselves, the ordinary citizens, are likely to be obliged to give a considerable amount of hard thinking to the matter.¹

¹[NOTE.—Since this was written the Government has introduced a Bill into Parliament with the object of altering these arrangements. The proposal is to remove all unemployed persons and their families from the care of the Public Assistance Committees, and to establish a new organization. This proposed new organization is to look after all persons who need public help, help from the community by reason of their unemployment. It will not be elected, nor is it to be connected with our local councils, but will be rather more akin to the Employment Exchanges, that is, it will work through Government officials who may seek advice from local committees. But these local committees will have no powers other than advisory. To the local committees will be left the care of the sick, the infirm, and the afflicted. (Nov. 1933.)]

Finally, there are pensions. Pensions for the old were provided as long ago as 1908, on a non-contributory plan. The necessary cash is provided by the taxpayers as a whole, and there is a means test for those who apply for the pension. At the time there was much discussion between those who favoured the contributory plan, who pointed out that old age, like illness, was a thing that most of us must expect, and for which therefore we ought to make some provision, even if we could not make enough, and the others who believed that the simplest and easiest method was to provide for all old people below a certain limit of income. There are difficulties about people with modest savings, people who have tried to make some provision but have not been able to make enough, but upon the whole most people would probably agree that the scheme as we have it has worked reasonably well, has not discouraged either proper foresight nor family feeling, and has eased the latter years of numbers of people. Within the last few years we have undertaken to provide not only for the old, but also for widows and orphans. This scheme, like health and unemployment insurance, is upon a contributory basis. It was felt that the accidents of life, illness, unemployment, premature death, may come to most of us and must come to many, and that special provision should be made for them. That special provision most of us would wish to make, and ought to make, but we have decided that it is justifiable to ask for some help from the general body of taxpayers. It is too soon yet to judge the original plans, which are sure to need alteration in the light of experience, but it is the last and most recent experiment in the structure of insurance, and as such must be remembered.

This structure is a very important part of the new world of mutual help and collective action which we have been slowly building up for ourselves, and because

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its finance is so intricate and the relations of the different parts so imperfectly understood, because it has been planned and put up bit by bit and not thought out as a whole, we shall very likely find a long series of modifications necessary. Meanwhile, we as ordinary citizens are closely affected by it. We all pay in one way or another, and many of us in more ways than one, as insured persons, as taxpayers, or as employers. Many millions of us receive payments. But the difference between the insurance schemes and the public health and other plans is that public health and education are managed by our local councils, bodies with which we are or may be in close touch, while insurance is managed by government departments, though of course by the help of local officials and local committees, and we are apt to feel that we cannot easily get at the people who run it and upon whose decisions our own welfare may depend. The local officials are however available and usually very ready to help, and a moment's thought will shew that national schemes of this kind are more conveniently managed on national, rather than upon local, lines.

CHAPTER VIII

Public Assistance

FROM EARLIEST TIMES some provision has had to be made for those who fall by the wayside, those who for one reason or another, because of illness, or ill-health, or misfortune, are unable to support themselves. The first line of defence is the family, the next the neighbourhood. In old days much was done by religious bodies who cared for the sick, helped the weak and relieved the poor. When few people moved from their own villages, when life was stationary, when there were no great troubles, the family, the neighbours, the church, and in towns the guilds, were able to cope more or less completely with the business of caring for the old and the ill, widows and orphans, people crippled in body or mind, with all the unhappy or afflicted who could not care for themselves. But as the organization of life became more complicated, further provisions had to be made, and as everyone knows, that provision was made in this country over 300 years ago by empowering the parish authorities (the Overseers of the Poor) to collect compulsory contributions from the inhabitants, and with the money thus provided to set to work those who could but did not work, and to relieve the lame, impotent, blind and old.

The law of Elizabeth was for many long years the foundation of our system of Poor Relief. Changes both in law and administration took place, and one important development was the grouping of parishes together into what were called Unions. Special people were

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elected to do all this work. They were described as Guardians of the Poor, elected to administer the Poor Law, and their business was to care for those who could be described as destitute. For this business they raised the required funds by means of compulsory payments from the inhabitants of the union, the Poor Law Rate. They had a considerable measure of discretion, and there was a very wide variety in their methods. Some took the broadest possible views of their duty, others the narrowest. But all of them, extravagant or economical, wise or unwise, efficient or inefficient, had certain things to do, things which must be done. They had to care for children whose relatives could not support them, orphans and deserted and destitute, and they were not seldom obliged also to care for unhappy children whose surroundings were such as to place the children in serious moral or physical danger. They had to provide for many of those who were sick and ailing, mentally as well as physically, and for those who either could not or would not provide for themselves. Gradually, the Boards of Guardians built up hospitals, schools, casual wards for the wanderers, all sorts of varied provisions for children, for the old, the ill, and the destitute. This was no easy task, for all too often those who fell under their charge tended to be people for whom but little could be done, derelicts, hopeless invalids, mental and moral weaklings. But they commanded the services of numbers of public spirited men and women who served as Guardians, people who were determined to do everything possible to help those for whom they were responsible. No one familiar with poor law history, difficult and imperfect as much of the work was, can fail to recognize the devotion, the steady persistent work, the sympathy, the public spirit and the citizenship of large numbers of ordinary everyday people who gave their time and their energies to what was only too often a difficult

and thankless task. Some Boards made valuable experiments, especially with regard to the children. Here was a chance, not only of patching up or of waiting for the inevitable end, but of actually constructive work. The children were often given a sound start in life, and many good citizens have come from Poor Law Schools and Homes.

But as education, public health, pensions and the rest developed, it became more and more difficult to draw the line between the various bodies who were in one way or another helping or serving the locality. One family might be helped in one way or another, by quite a number of committees, each of whom had its own workers. It is easy to imagine a family with one feeble-minded member, who came under the care of the Mental Deficiency Committee, another blind, watched over by the Blind Committee, several children in the charge of the educational authorities, a baby looked after by the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee, and possibly born in the maternity ward of the Poor Law Hospital, and the whole in receipt of relief from the Poor Law Guardians, probably visited too by the public health authorities for one reason or another. Imagine the number of visitors and inspectors and helpers of all sorts who might deal with such a family, and the difficulty of arranging that each fully understood what the others were doing or trying to do.

When the pension schemes came into operation, and when also the development of public health and educational work meant that much which had been attempted by Poor Law Guardians was now done by other bodies, it became more than ever difficult to avoid what is popularly known as overlapping, and overlapping inevitably results in waste both of time and of money. So that there was a general desire for re-organization, and after much enquiry and the publication of many reports, the

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consideration of many points of view, the whole thing was re-arranged (in 1929). There are now no more special areas and specially elected authorities for Poor Law purposes. Every county and every county borough must, through its council, make plans not only for education, health and all the other activities which they undertake on our behalf, but also for carrying on the work which used to be done by the Poor Law Guardians. The essence of the change is that we no longer elect one set of people, the Poor Law Guardians, especially, to do Poor Law work, and to do nothing else. Instead, we impose what used to be their work upon our local councils, the people we elect to manage all our local affairs upon our behalf.

These councils deal with the new work in various ways, according to what they believe to be the needs and wishes of their particular locality. Generally speaking, the hospitals which used to be managed by the Guardians are now in charge of the public health committees, the schools are managed by the local educational authorities, while those mentally ill are cared for by the committee which already dealt with the problem of mental disease, and so on. For some purposes, for instance the care of the insane, councils are allowed to combine, a method of action which is often both economical and efficient.

But whatever else they do, each county or county borough council must appoint from among its elected members a Public Assistance Committee which will carry on the work of helping and relieving the needs of the destitute within its area, that work which was formerly done by the Poor Law Guardians. The Public Assistance Committee may add to its numbers men and women who are not members of the local council, but who may have special experience or special qualification for the work. They may also arrange for special local

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committees called Guardians Committees, which can provide the very necessary local knowledge and carry out local enquiries. But for the general management of public assistance the main committee must be responsible. Meanwhile, the local committees in fact often contain exactly the people who before the change were actually doing the work, and in some places there is little apparent change as far as the administration of relief is concerned, although in others there has been something like a clean sweep.

As in other matters, so with regard to Public Assistance there is a very considerable amount of variety. Some local councils and their committees have made wide use of non-elected members (who are usually called co-opted members) others but little, others again have altogether refused to avail themselves of their services. Whatever be the composition of the Public Assistance Committee, its work is bound to be more specialized than was that of the old Board of Guardians, because its main and almost its only duty is that of administering public relief, that is, of helping the people who cannot help themselves, and who are obliged to depend upon their fellow-citizens for support. This committee is no longer responsible, as were the Boards of Guardians, for the children and the sick.

But theirs is no easy task. They must be merciful and helpful, but they are spending money which has been compulsorily contributed by people who may be only just a little better off than those upon whom the money is to be spent. They must help, adequately, reasonably, wisely, but they must not help in such a way that the ordinary citizen finds it less trouble to live by means of their help than to make the effort to help himself. They must to some extent distinguish between genuine misfortune and deserved mishap. They must try to rebuild, to restore those who come under their

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care to the ordinary business of life. They must not only shelter the derelicts, the hopeless, but they must try so to organize the help they give as to prevent the coming into existence of other derelicts, others who can never attain to reasonable citizenship. They must provide for those who suffer through their own fault, and those whose suffering is due to unavoidable misfortune, and they must try not only so to provide as to prevent further fault, but also to keep the families or individuals who come upon the rates through no fault, but because of circumstances outside their own control, in such a way that they may be fully able and ready to take every and any suitable opportunity of getting back to ordinary life.¹ It is easy to be generous with other people's money, and plenty of good work can be done with it, but much thought is necessary in order to make sure whether the doing will increase the work or lessen it in the long run. They must draw the difficult line between wise and unwise expenditure, that line which is so desperately hard for us all to draw even with our own money.

In short, the duty of organizing public assistance has added very considerably to the work of our elected representatives upon county and borough councils, and the very serious difficulties through which we are groping our way in this troubled after-war world makes their task harder than it might otherwise have been. More than ever do we need a high standard of citizenship in order that we may be well served by our elected representatives, and may deserve good service.

Meanwhile, what we have to remember is that there is in every county and county borough a Public Assistance Committee, the business of which is to relieve the destitute, and in every part of the county (probably also in most wards of a big town) a local committee whose business it is to make the necessary enquiries and to

¹ See note to p. 79.

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give the necessary supervision, help and advice. These Public Assistance Committees will employ their own officials, who will look after their institutions and help to administer relief, and the money required for all this comes out of the pockets of the rest of the citizens.

CHAPTER IX

Safety and Communications

ONE OF THE changes that has certainly taken place in this century is that we employ a very great many more people to do our work for us, collectively, than we did in old days. If we consider our own village, or our own neighbourhood, we shall find that a number of our neighbours are working for us and are paid by us out of rates or taxes or a combination of both. In other words, we, the ratepayers and taxpayers, are employing whole armies of people to do things which we, as electors, believe should be done. Some of these people are easily recognized, well known to us all, others hidden from our view. For instance, the public analyst, a person few of us see, and of whose existence I strongly suspect that very few of us are aware, is constantly busy, with his highly-trained staff, trying to ensure the purity of our food and our drink. The dustman and the refuse collector, whom we do see, and whose work we therefore know, and let us hope appreciate, are helping to keep our streets and houses free from dirt and consequently from disease. The medical officer and his staff of specialist helpers, some of whom we know and most of whom we probably do not know at all, are busy on our behalf. Sanitary inspectors, health visitors, tuberculosis doctors and nurses, and all the rest of them, try to make us understand the laws of health, to maintain conditions which fulfil those laws, to prevent the pollution of food and water, to keep all sorts of buildings clean and wholesome, to prevent the spread of infection,

to guard the health of babies and little children, to help mothers in the care of their children from the health point of view.

The educational work of the community employs another vast number, teachers of every kind, elementary, secondary, technical, domestic, artistic, medical, scientific, as well as inspectors and another army of school cleaners and caretakers, builders, painters and decorators. In nearly every neighbourhood and in every village there must be a considerable proportion of the inhabitants occupied one way and another in keeping us well, and in educating ourselves and our children.

But health and education, enormously important as they are, by no means exhaust the sum of the councils' activities, and although they account for very many millions of our expenditure, do not account for nearly all. There are many other familiar figures of our daily lives who work for just the same reason as the school teacher or the medical officer. They work, and we pay them for their work, because we as citizens have made up our minds that it is convenient, or necessary, or desirable, to have certain things done for us all, and paid for by us collectively. And because we have so agreed that the services in question must be performed, and must be paid for, we have made them compulsory. Local Councils **MUST** carry out the Public Health Acts, and the Education Acts. They *must* find their share of the money necessary for carrying them out, and they do it by collecting the required amounts from those of us who are ratepayers.

Similarly we, as citizens, have decided that law and order must be maintained, and the policeman, that most familiar of all public servants, is there as the outward and visible sign of our determination. The police are controlled and paid for by county and county borough councils (except the Metropolitan Police, who are directly

under the Home Office). Local Councils *must* provide us with a suitable police force, just as they must provide us with schools, and we find it well worth our while to pay for police services. The police have very varied duties to perform and, like other public servants, the scope of their activities has been considerably enlarged of late years. Their primary duty is of course to protect us and our possessions from harm, and to enforce the observance of the law. Nowadays, much of their time and energy is devoted to looking after the traffic on the roads, for we live in a restless age. We all move perpetually about in or on buses and trams and cars and cycles and coaches (though still occasionally on our own feet), and endless things are moved about too. As all the traffic wants to go fast and most of it succeeds in so doing, it takes much regulating. Every local authority has to spend considerable sums and give hard thought to the business of trying to provide for the maintenance of order upon its roads. The police have all sorts of other odd jobs too, as well as that of keeping us and the traffic in order. They have, for instance, to enforce the Acts which deal with the diseases of animals, and they help people who have lost themselves, or their memories, or their way, or their property.

What about the roads upon which we all move? They, too, form an extremely important and also extremely expensive part of our public business. Our councils have each a Highways Committee which is responsible for the roads, looks after them and keeps them in condition, and it is only too easy to understand how much work that involves. Roads of some sort there have, of course, been, not only for hundreds but for thousands of years, and the business of keeping them in some sort of repair has lain upon us for many centuries. Long, long ago the leading men in each village had to meet periodically and to consider among other

important pieces of local business that of mending the King's Highway, and of filling up the worst holes in its surface. But never before in our history has there been so much road work, for never before have we all moved so incessantly. There are more and more of us, and more and more vehicles to move us and to move things about for us, and the responsibility for the roads is a very real one. Very large numbers of people are employed by county and town councils solely in the business of mending and looking after roads, many others in making new roads or enlarging and improving the old narrow or twisting ways which seem inadequate because of our increasing need for movement. A look at your next demand note for local rates, and especially at what it tells you about the charges for Highways and Bridges, will show you that a very considerable proportion of what you pay in rates is spent on roads. We have perhaps the best roads in the world, but we have also our own special difficulties. We are a very old country, and the lines of our roads were traced hundreds or perhaps thousands of years ago by people who wandered here and there to avoid marshes or woods or other obstacles which no longer exist, with the result that their course is apt to be a series of bewildering curves and twists. Moreover, we are a very crowded island: there are a very great many of us to the square mile, and we need more and more room to move about in, while for obvious reasons the land along the roads is just that which is most likely to be fully occupied. Keeping the road surface fit for the incessant burden of traffic is a problem, but a far more difficult one is that of straightening, widening, altering, making by-passes to save ancient city streets and quiet villages from the roar and rush of modern traffic, and yet to avoid the expenditure of more than we can afford, and to reconcile all the many claims which necessarily arise. The Highways Committee of

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our county council must make heavy demands upon the time and abilities of its members, and the County Surveyor must clearly possess not only skill, but experience and a high degree of training.

Bridges, too, must be kept in repair, and many need or have needed or will need strengthening and widening to fit them for their heavy modern burdens. In towns the streets and pavement must be kept in repair, and plans must be made for regulating the traffic. In the country someone must look after the lanes, see that they are not flooded, or overgrown, or worn away, and that they are fit for our use.

Certainly one of the most familiar figures on those roads and in those streets is the Postman, and he too is a public servant. But the Post Office, although a public service, one of the things that is managed by public servants on our behalf, is not quite like the rest. It is not maintained by rates or by taxes. On the contrary, it provides the Chancellor of the Exchequer with sums which enable him to ask less from us in taxes (or perhaps spend more in other ways) than he would otherwise do. It is a government service, a government monopoly, managed on behalf of all the citizens by Civil Servants, that is, by permanent officials who are under the supervision of one of His Majesty's Ministers, the Postmaster General, who in his turn, like other Ministers, is responsible to Parliament and who can be called to account in Parliament if any considerable section of the electors feel discontent about his methods of running the business. His charge, the Post Office, is unlike the charges of his fellow Ministers, for instance, the Minister of Health or of Education. When any one of us buys a postage stamp and puts it on a letter, we are doing just the same sort of thing that we do when we buy a bus ticket and put ourselves into a bus. We are paying someone to transport our letter, just as we pay someone

to transport ourselves. What we pay covers the expenses of that transport, and provides a little over and above those expenses. Just as the bus company has to pay conductors and drivers and cleaners and mechanics, and pay for running repairs and insurance and petrol and office charges and the making and the mending of the buses themselves, all out of our fares, so too has the Postmaster General to pay postmasters and postmen and postal officials and all sorts of transport charges by road and rail and ship out of the pennies and three-halfpennies that you and I give him for the postage of our postcards and letters and parcels. If he charged less, he tells us that he would lose on the transaction. As it is, he not only makes our payments cover his expenses, but has a balance which he hands over to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

There are, of course, differences between the Post Office and any ordinary business. Because it is a government monopoly, and because its officials and employes are government servants, yours and mine, they can be used to do government work of various kinds, work which is not bought and sold as is that of the transport of letters and parcels and telegrams. That is, because the Post Office is not commercial business but a government monopoly, its servants can be, and are, used by the government to do other work which must be done and for which, if the Post Office servants were not available, there would have to be some other office and other servants. For instance, pensions are paid through the Post Office, and licences taken out—driving licences and dog licences and wireless and the rest. From time to time there is a good deal said about the need for reforms in Post Office management. Some people consider that the charges not only could but should be lowered, others that the pay and hours of work of those employed are unsatisfactory. The Post Office, people say, is a

commercial business, and should be managed on commercial lines. Others say that as it is used for non-commercial work, it cannot be regarded as a purely business organization.

However that may be, there it is, one of the most familiar elements in our daily life. We all unhesitatingly trust it with our letters and our parcels, and however vaguely they are addressed and however insecurely packed, seldom does the Post Office fail to deliver them, seldom is our trust misplaced. The Post Office, as we all know, manages not only letters but also telegrams and telephones, and one of the main sources of recent complaint has been the matter of telephones. It is possible that some day the whole matter of the Post Office may come under review, that changes may be made, and that we, the ordinary citizens of the country, may have to consider the matter. But meanwhile we all use it, and that it can be improved, that the Postmaster General is not deaf to our remarks, is shewn by the attention that has recently been given to telephone development in response partly to the demands of country people, and partly to those of business critics.

CHAPTER X

May but not Must

EVERY COUNTY AND borough council must, whether it wishes or not, do a number of things on our behalf, and some of the most important of those things have now been described. It must take certain steps for the preservation of our health and safety, for our education, for the maintenance of our roads and bridges, and for police assistance. How well or how badly it does all those things is the business of its own citizens, the local electors of its particular area. But well or badly, something must be done, and committees for the doing must be appointed and must function. On the other hand there are numbers of other things which the various local councils may do if they choose (that is, if their electors wish them to, and express their wishes clearly), but which they need not do unless it is desired that they should.

They may, for example, build their own museums, art-galleries and libraries, and a very great many of them use this power. The Public Library plays an important part in many places, and is a real and valuable element in the life of a town. Some counties and towns have special Library Committees, some do the work through their Education Committees. The actual burden upon the rates is light, and the advantage of a Public Library is enormous. Of late years there has been a special and valuable development for the benefit of children, and in many places there is as part of the Public Library a room full of children's books, with chairs and tables suited to the size of the expected

readers, and with attendants who can advise and help the children in their choice of books. As part of the business of preparing young people for the wise use of leisure as well as that of employing their existing leisure, the value of a children's library is clear, and generally speaking, the children seem not only to use the libraries very freely, but also very well. They take care of the books, they are tidy and orderly, and the whole movement is perhaps one of the most useful of modern developments. In the country special arrangements can be made, and county councils can help the smaller councils to provide libraries. But the smallest of all our local councils, the Parish Council, can have its own Library if it so desires, or it can join with other parishes, under the auspices of the county council, and plans can be made for the provision and the circulation of books.

Local councils have been empowered to provide baths and wash-houses for many years, indeed for nearly a century. Public baths, the charge for which is a matter for the council in question, have been built by most large towns, and nowadays many of them not only provide ordinary baths and wash-houses but swimming baths, both covered and open air. As a rule, special arrangements are made for the school children, and swimming instruction is provided for them, so that the provision of swimming baths might be thought of as coming under the heading of education and also under that of public health. It looks as if the authorities might soon be expected to provide not only accommodation for swimmers but also for sun-bathers.

Another very different but important power possessed by local councils is the provision of small-holdings and allotments. County councils are now very large land-owners, as a result of their provision of land for small-holdings. County councils must have some sort of a

committee, an Agricultural Committee, to deal with agricultural business, but they vary very much in the amount that they actually do. For allotments there is a large demand in some places, and a fair demand almost everywhere. Although we have apparently become a town-dwelling people rather than a race of country dwellers, we still have the passion for growing plants and caring for animals in our blood, and many of us hope for a future in which more and more of us, wherever we live, will not only have access to open spaces, but also have gardens or bits of land for our own cultivation. One of our national gifts is flower gardening, and English gardens, small as well as large, are justly famous. As to the open spaces, it certainly looks as if we should have to take trouble, perhaps a good deal of trouble, to secure them. There are so very many of us living in this small island, and our buildings are spreading so fast over what only yesterday were open green fields.

More attention is now being given to planning, though some of us think that not quite enough is given even yet. We begin to see that we must try to prevent the haphazard growth of buildings, and the destruction of beautiful pieces of our countryside. We begin to understand the terrible waste which results from want of foresight. But not every council, nor all electors, are as yet fully awake to the necessity for wise planning, nor indeed are they agreed as to the plans that should be made. Some think of utility and are willing to sweep away beautiful old buildings that have stood for centuries, and give character and loveliness to their surroundings. Others, because of the need for increased rateable value, or for more houses, allow buildings to cover low-lying ground, or destroy beautiful trees and woodland that have taken a hundred years or more to grow. All find it hard to reconcile the conflicting claims of economy, beauty, convenience, business,

amenities, the need for more houses and the importance of open spaces. But that very difficulty suggests the immense importance of the matter, and the urgent need for wisdom and forethought in development.

Local councils may provide both parks and recreation grounds, and thus play their part in the preservation of open spaces. Some of the more enterprising have availed themselves of their powers in order to secure large stretches of moor or woodland for the use and benefit of their citizens. As the speed and noise of modern life increase, it seems more than ever important that there should be not only plenty of room for organized games but also safe playgrounds for children, and quiet places for their elders. Recreation grounds are important in both town and country, but so in towns are places where, among trees and grass and flowers, we can get away from the smell of petrol and the roar of traffic, while in the villages there is often great need for a safe playground for the children. All these things may be provided by the local councils, if they do not exist already, and they may be paid for out of the rates. They may, of course, also be done, and fortunately often are and have been done, by voluntary effort.

Another power possessed by the councils, part of what we now feel to be our business as citizens, is that of regulating advertisements in such a way as to prevent them from disfiguring the countryside. Councils will have to walk warily in their use of this valuable power if they are not to be accused on the one hand of interfering with business and on the other of letting business ruin beauty. Here perhaps, if anywhere, much will depend upon the expression of public feeling among the electors. Those of us who have these feelings can busy ourselves in rousing them among our neighbours, if we believe that our countryside is being disfigured by the activities of advertisers. Our councils are hardly likely to

act, unless they believe that public opinion is behind them.

The County Council Agricultural Committees which, as has been said, *must* exist, *may* do a very great deal to help country dwellers in the care of their bees and pigs, their poultry and fruit, and their general activities and productions. They may help with advice about insect and other pests, about how to get rid of injurious weeds, about the encouragement of rural industries, and a large number of other things. The County Council's agricultural experts may play a very important part in country life, and help both directly and indirectly in very many different ways.

Local Councils have power to undertake a number of activities of a business kind. Many own and manage their local gas, electricity, water, and their trams, and have done so for a number of years. Municipal trading, as it is called, is not quite like other public activities. The councils, when they provide and sell gas, or electricity, are not doing it as part of their business of maintaining public health, but for other reasons, because their citizens think that such provision can be made more cheaply, or more efficiently, or more wisely, by the local council than it could be by private bodies or individuals. The matter has to be considered rather as is the Postmaster General's work, and the councils have to decide whether they will sell their products, gas, water, electricity or transport, at exactly cost price as near as may be, or if they will aim at making a profit, and if so whether such profit shall be used to lower the general rates, or what shall be done with it. Sometimes the question is not what shall be done with the profit, but what must be done about the loss. Shall the burden be placed upon the ratepayer, or must the price of the product be raised? If so, what will those who use the product be likely to say to their elected

representatives, and on the other hand, will there not be an outcry from the ratepayers if they are expected to meet the deficit ?

The matter of housing, about which something has already been said, can be, and indeed must be, considered from this point of view. What is the business of local councils with regard to housing ? Clearly, first of all to prevent the creation or continuance of any houses which cannot be made healthy. Next, to discover where, of what kind, whether and why there is a shortage of houses. If there is, they must further consider how best it can be remedied. If the council itself undertakes the provision, private enterprise will inevitably seek other fields of activity, for the ordinary builder does not like to compete with houses which are financed by public funds. If again the council provides the houses, as councils so largely have done and continue to do, they must face the many extremely difficult problems which result. How are they to decide, and on what lines, which of their citizens shall be housed at the partial expense of their fellows ? How much of the cost can the citizens (ratepayers and taxpayers) as a whole be expected to bear ? All these tenants of publicly provided houses are also local electors. It is important to avoid the difficulties that may arise between them and other local electors, who pay the same and receive less, and also important to prevent the fate of elections from being determined by rival offers of the expenditure of other people's money. The whole matter is urgent, important, and very far from easy. Every woman knows that housing is the foundation of health and good citizenship. Most of us know that the old houses run up in a hurry during the last century, when the population began to grow so fast, are wearing out, or worn. What is the best way of replacing them with new and better houses (for our standards of housing have

fortunately risen considerably) without creating privileged classes, and without laying undue burdens upon the shoulders of ratepayers?

Again, many places provide publicly for certain things which cannot be expected to pay directly, but which by attracting visitors to the neighbourhood will increase its general prosperity. Thus, some places maintain a municipal orchestra, others piers and pleasure grounds, while one city owns a famous racecourse. These powers are naturally only likely to be used in special cases, but even the modest parish council may, if it likes, indulge in a number of activities, while the district council has larger powers. It may, for example, provide a public clock if its inhabitants so desire. There are many other possibilities of different kinds as well as those to which reference has been made.

Obviously, all these things which MAY be done will vary in importance and in desirability from place to place. The problems that present themselves to the city councillors of Blackpool or Bournemouth are quite unlike those of Sheffield or Birmingham, and again quite unlike those of the country districts which in their turn vary almost infinitely in their needs and their desires. In some places the public spirit or generosity of the inhabitants has already provided for needs which in others must be met, if at all, from public funds. In some, much money and much energy must be spent in repairing the mistakes of the past, in others there is room (indeed, surely in all) for wise planning, if in some but little to undo.

CHAPTER XI

Conclusion

IN THE EARLY days of our history the business of the central government was to protect us from foreign foes, to keep us as far as might be at peace among ourselves, to enable us to go safely about our ordinary business, and to provide cheap and accessible justice.

Meanwhile in every village or town the chief local men carried on the local business. They met together from time to time and decided what should be done about the repair of roads and bridges, the regulation of markets, the methods of farming, the settlement of disputes between neighbours about boundaries, and the like.

All these things are still done by central and local governing bodies, by the King's Government, and by the local councils. But as life has become more and more complicated, so too has the business of government. Not only the King's Ministers, but also local councils have enormous amounts of business to get through, and employ very large numbers of people in order to do it. The King's government still has to provide for the defence of the Realm, for which purpose it maintains the armed forces of the crown, military, naval, aerial. It employs ambassadors and diplomats to keep each country informed of the feelings and interests of the others. It provides justice, and His Majesty's judges with numbers of clerks and other employes spend their working lives in its administration. But to those early duties it has added very many more, and I have already

referred to the very large numbers of our fellow-citizens who are directly employed by us, the taxpayers, in one way or another, not only as soldiers or sailors or airmen or judges, but also as civil servants of all kinds, pensions officers, labour exchange officials, postal officials, clerks, typists, office cleaners, to say nothing of the very considerable numbers that are kept busy collecting taxes and rates from all of us to pay all these people and meet their expenses.

But the main development of our times has been the enormous increase in the work imposed upon the local councils, county, borough, district. Even the little parish councils have been kept busy. Health, education, transport, public assistance, all these things have changed and grown, and they not only involve the employment of large numbers of people locally, but also of numbers more in the corresponding government offices in London. For although the work is done locally by the councils, it is supervised and to some extent controlled by the appropriate Minister, whether of Education, Health, Transport, Agriculture. Because he dispenses to the local councils money paid by us, the taxpayers, he must in our interests see that it is expended in accordance with the laws we, the electors, have caused to be passed. To advise and help him, to enable him to make the proper contributions from the taxes, he requires the help of numbers of specially trained civil servants. Consequently, among our fellow-citizens we see not only the members of the fighting forces, or the judges, or the tax collectors and customs officers and excise officials, not only all the many civil servants in the great government offices in London, all of them obviously servants of the government and paid out of the taxes, but also in every village and every town, numbers of people who are also employed by the government or else employed by one of the local councils.

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There are the teachers, and the postmen, and the policemen, and the roadmen, and the rate collector, and the sanitary inspectors, and the education inspectors, and the health inspectors, and the agricultural inspectors ; there are the school caretakers and all the employés in the Town Hall or the council offices, and we could go on adding to that list for some time.

We, all of us, taxpayers and ratepayers, are responsible for these employés of ours, for their rates of pay and their hours and conditions of labour, little as most of us realize that responsibility. They are working on our account, rendering services, in one way or another, to us all. If we are not satisfied with those services, either in quantity or quality, or if on the other hand we feel that some of them are unnecessary, and that we would rather do without them and keep what they cost for other purposes, then in either case, our right course is to persuade a sufficient number of our fellow-citizens to agree with our views, and to help us to bring about the change in conditions that we desire.

What is the duty of the ordinary citizen ? What is there for us, the ordinary every-day people, to do ? Because of this great development of public services we have in a sense become lazy. We are apt to take it for granted that if anything wants doing it is the business of some public official to do it. The public officials in their turn, are a little apt to distrust and dislike the volunteer. Yet there is plenty still to do and plenty of scope for both officials and volunteers. Much of the work that now falls upon local councils is the direct result of volunteer efforts in past days. Thus, to take the thing about which I know most as an example, the Maternity and Child Welfare Committees, which the county and county borough councils are now legally bound to appoint, exist and function because early in this century a few groups of enthusiasts began to do work

for mothers and babies, and to make the rest of the public understand what they were doing, and why, and the results.

There are still a very great many things which many of us think ought to be done, and which could be done if enough of us want them, and will not be done unless enough of us are prepared to take enough trouble. Many of these can and should be done by voluntary means. There are, and for my part I fervently hope there always will be, endless things which we can manage ourselves, voluntarily, in ways that suit ourselves and the special needs of our locality. Volunteers can experiment and adapt, they can invent new plans to meet new needs, they can suggest improvements in arrangements supposed to meet needs long understood.

Some people believe that there is work, now done by voluntary effort, which ought to be taken over by the state, as child welfare has been taken over, ought to be made compulsory, paid for out of public funds (that is out of compulsory contributions from the taxpayer and the ratepayer), and managed by public officials. Other people, on the other hand, believe that this process of piling work upon the local councils has gone quite far enough. Not only, say the critics, have these councils a very great deal to do, but also the cost of their work has become too heavy a burden upon the public purse, that is upon the citizens who pay the rates and taxes. It is extremely hard to be economical with public money. Certain standards must be maintained. Risks cannot be taken with other people's money. It is hard to resist public pressure of all kinds. It is almost invariably the case that work undertaken by public bodies costs more, sometimes considerably more, than it did when it was managed on voluntary lines by people who had with difficulty to collect every penny that they spent. It may possibly (though not

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certainly) be better done, it is certainly more universally done. But the increased expense of public work, as compared with voluntary work, is an argument forcibly used by people who dislike the thought of any addition to the work of public councils. On the one hand it gets done, and we are sure that it gets done. On the other we have ceased to use a valuable force, voluntary enthusiasm and devotion. Like everything else in this world, the choice is one between a number of things which have to be carefully weighed against one another, never altogether easy, and usually with plenty to be said on both sides by those who know most.

Everyone is familiar with the fact that the cost of our locally administered social services has risen a great deal in late years. Not everyone knows what we get in return, and consequently not everyone is able to form a reasonable opinion as to whether we are getting what we want, in quantity and quality, at the price we are willing to pay. Most of us appreciate the services we receive, some of us appreciate them very much, others take them for granted. Not all of us are willing, and perhaps some are unable, to increase, possibly even to maintain, their contributions towards the payments involved by these services, to pay more rates or more taxes. Many people are turning all these matters over in their minds, thinking about what must be done, or might be done, or could be done, or should be done, when and how it should be paid for, and how far we receive value for what we already pay. In some places people feel that their local councils do not do enough, in others that for the payments made by the ratepayers better value might be received, in others again that the councils are trying to do more than they can properly achieve. Again there are places where people would willingly pay a little more if they could get something that they need, for instance, a better water supply, or

more adequate arrangements for refuse removal, or better or safer roads. In other places yet again people not only want but need more from their councils, but are quite unable to pay more, while in others they feel that much more could be done for the same money by means of better management.

It is the clear duty of the ordinary citizen to know and understand as much as he (and even more she) is able to understand about the work of his or her local council, and to know something about his or her local representatives. Who are they? When did they first get on to the council? What do they do there? How regularly do they attend? On what committees do they serve? Are they the kind of people you feel ought to represent you? Who are on the committees which most nearly concern us housewives, the Education Committee which looks after our children's schooling, the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee, the Public Health Committee? Those people, whoever they are, are our colleagues in the most important job in the world, the job of minding the family. Are they the people we want to have as our colleagues? Can we work loyally and well with them? On the whole, the members of our local councils, our local governors, are people of whom as a nation we can be proud: honest, upright, genuinely anxious to serve the public to the best of their ability, and members of the local councils because of that anxiety. But there are individuals who are less satisfactory than the rest. Some of our local governors, with all due respect, are duds, some cranks, and some are people who are more interested in themselves and their ambitions than in us.

There is not a very large proportion of these less satisfactory people, but they might well be fewer if we, the electors, and especially the women electors, took a little more trouble about local elections. We are told

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every year how few of us even take the trouble to go to the poll at the time of local elections, how our whole fate in the matter of local government is settled by quite a small proportion of us. Why is this so? Partly because most of us are too busy, partly because few of us know how closely these local governors of ours affect our own lives. If we realized it, I expect we should take more vivid an interest in municipal elections. As a practical housewife, I have an instinctive distrust both of the man who wants to get on to the local council simply in order to cut down the rates, and of the other one who tries to get on by lavish promises of spending other people's money. Most of us housewives know that what matters is getting our money's worth, and that it is not spending, but wise spending, that is the heart of the problem. We are in the majority, we women. There are more of us than of our male fellow-citizens, and if we have the kind of local governors that we do not quite like or approve, we have no one but ourselves to thank.

There is need for many more women as members of local councils as well as need for more of the best kind of men. Women are so closely concerned with much, I might almost say most, of the work of local councils, that it really cannot be properly done without their help. Women, too, seem to be better at economizing than men, perhaps because they have had so much of it to do, and some of us think that women tend specially to understand the difference between true and false economy, that they not only value the saving of pence, but appreciate the wise and careful spending of pounds.

Perhaps not a very large number of women are likely to be available for service upon local councils. But all of us can and should take part in the formation of wise public opinion. As things are, opportunities are lost because they are not understood. Often more or

better use might be made of the Public Library, or the local education committee, or the local agricultural committee. These bodies have as a rule few women members, and can therefore hardly be expected to know what women need, however willing to help they would be if they did know.

Organized women in Townswomen's Guilds and Women's Institutes and Co-operative Guilds and Clubs and such bodies can do much to enable or to help other women to use the machinery that actually exists. For instance, the Education Committee can often supply a teacher, domestic or literary or artistic or what not, though it cannot organize a class. The modern woman's increased need for further education of all kinds can then be met by the co-operation of voluntary organizations and the local education committee.

Again, country women felt keenly the shortage of rural telephones. They knew that a telephone might easily make the difference between life and death. They organized themselves through the Women's Institutes and brought the right kind of pressure to bear upon the Postmaster General and upon public opinion. When the Postmaster General (and his officials) had had the whole matter carefully explained by people who knew what they were talking about, and who moreover represented a large body of public opinion which could be backed by votes, he was prepared so to alter the existing regulations as to make it much easier for those of us who live in villages to have an adequate telephone service. We may not yet have quite all that we want, but we are much better off than we were before we roused ourselves to get something done.

Another thing about which we are beginning to take trouble is the matter of litter. We realize what a horrible mess people can make of this lovely country of ours, and we are trying to plan, not only for the tidying up of the

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mess, an unpleasant job, but to prevent it from being made, and here we have a fruitful field for our labours. Women, I suppose, have always had to tidy up and pick up the bits, but it is fervently to be hoped that they and their male belongings will also help to educate the public to do its own tidying, thus preventing the mess from being made. It will take some doing, but there are signs that we are beginning to get it done, and that the organized work and opinion of Women's Institutes and Scouts and Guides and Rural Community Councils, and other public spirited bodies, is making itself felt.

We, too, have to work out better plans for disposing of our own tins and bottles and broken crocks. In towns all that is done for us, though not always as well as it might be ; in the country we are only beginning to make proper plans. We need to learn as a whole people the useful lesson of clearing as we go.

We are beginning to plan—to take quite another subject—for the under-fives, the children between babyhood and school age, but there is still plenty to do. Again we are getting on with plans of all kinds, voluntary, public, a mixture of both, for the young people when they leave school and need all sorts of help. Here again there is much to be done.

We ought to be taking trouble, and some organized bodies are taking trouble, about the purity of our food-supplies. We ought to make it worth while for those who sell to us such things as bread, and fruit, and fish, and meat, and milk, to keep them as they should be kept, away from flies and dust, rather than as they are too often now kept, fully exposed to every sort of contamination, because we housewives do not know enough of our own business to insist upon right conditions.

Another matter that specially concerns women, mainly townswomen, is smoke. If it were not for smoke we should have incomparably less to do, less cleaning,

less washing, less caring for the sick, less endurance of poor health. Think of what happens to light curtains in the country, and compare that with their fate in London or Manchester. Think of the tons of soot which are deposited upon our surfaces, and which we have to dust and scrub and polish off again. I cannot understand why we put up with it all so meekly. As long as we are so unwisely enduring, smoke will continue to blacken our lives and our lungs and our houses and our curtains and our clothes, and to shut off the blue sky overhead. It may be less trouble to burn our coal in the messy way we do, pouring out black smoke, and that is why things are as they are. Every woman knows that no man will use his brains to find another than his accustomed way of doing things unless he has good reason. Why should he? He is perfectly right to conserve his energy. But in this case there is very good reason, and as we, the women, are the chief sufferers, it is our business to make him see that reason, to make him use his powers of invention, to provide us with better methods of heating, to provide his own factories and works with cleaner methods of using coal. It is for us to enforce the existing laws about pollution, to do what we can at home, a very small contribution from any one individual, but a great one from the mass. And it is for us to keep public opinion alive upon what we think matters, whether it is the cinema or unclean food or unclean smoke. Why should we have life blackened? Let us not be resigned. A little rebellion in a good cause is a thoroughly wholesome thing.

There are, and there must be, differences of opinion about what things are best done by public bodies and paid for out of rates and taxes, and what should be done by voluntary bodies, and paid for by voluntary gifts and voluntary subscriptions. Sometimes and in some places and for some purposes one is best, sometimes

CONCLUSION

the other. There are things which may be done, and things which must be done, by local councils: there are things which might be done, and things which ought to be done, by voluntary effort.

There is plenty of room for honest difference of opinion. But what ought not to exist, and too often does exist, is the tendency to want everything and give nothing, to expect all sorts of services and to be unwilling to make any contribution towards the cost, either in money or in effort, for providing those services. There are too many people who grumble about cost, or inefficiency, or inconvenience, but who are unwilling to find out accurately what the possibilities are, about who is responsible, what is actually being done and what might be done. If there are things which we feel should be done, and for which as ratepayers or taxpayers we are willing to pay, then it is our business so to organize public opinion as to get them done. If we believe that there is extravagance, or unwise expenditure, or unwise lack of expenditure, or unnecessary buildings, or the wrong kind of buildings, then again it is our business to arouse public opinion and get things changed. Some of us get a very great deal more than we pay, others pay more than we get. Some of us think that we get our money's worth, a good many do not. Most of us, I rather suspect, think less accurately and less energetically about the whole business of government, whether central or local, than perhaps it is our duty and also our interest to do. For we have an active, interesting and valuable machinery of government which spends on our behalf (and out of our pockets) not only millions but hundreds of millions of pounds, and the more we know about it the better is it likely to work.

